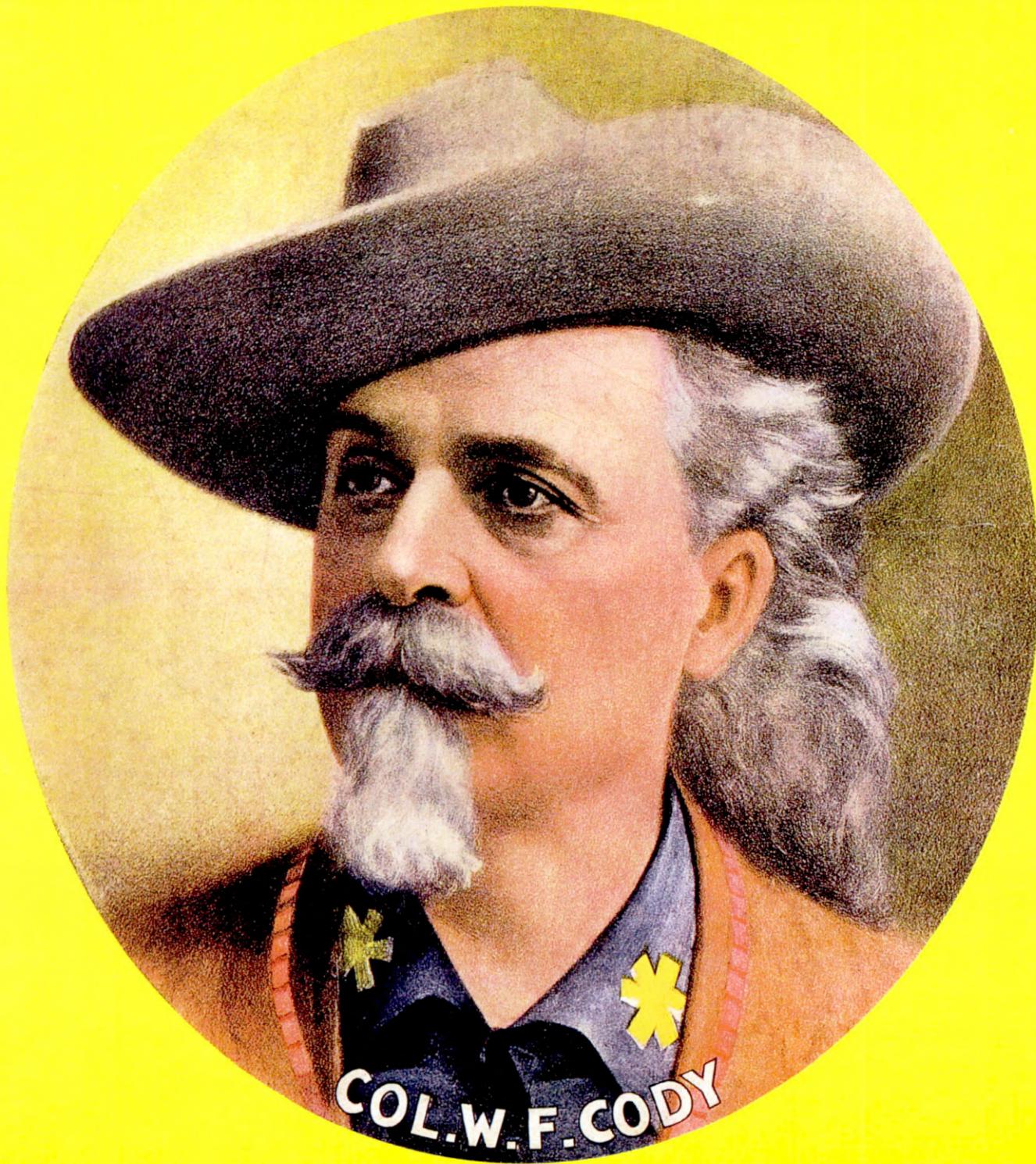


BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society, Inc.

JULY-AUGUST 1998



COL. W. F. CODY

Bandwagon

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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THE FRONT COVER

P. T. Barnum and Buffalo Bill Cody were two of the most recognized names in outdoor show business at the turn of the century.

Cody's first wild west show opened in Omaha, Nebraska on May 17, 1883. With his partner Nate Salsbury the show grew to a major railroad outfit. Cody toured Europe three time, the first being in 1887.

By 1896 the show was under the ownership of James A. Bailey. The features were Annie Oakley and Frank Butler as well as a unit of the United States Cavalry, American cowboys, German Cuirassiers, French Dragoons, Royal Irish Lancers, Russian Cossacks, Arabs, Mexicans and South American Gauchos.

In 1900 the show traveled on 41 railroad cars in two sections, carrying 16 horse cars, 9 sleepers and 16 flats.

In 1909 the Buffalo Bill show was combined with Pawnee Bill. The last year for the combined show was 1913. Cody's last days were with the 101 Ranch Wild West. He died in 1917.

Cody is pictured on the cover as he looked in the 1890s. Pfening Arc-

hives.

THE BACK COVER

The back cover is the back cover of the 1910 Carl Hagenbeck-Great Wallace Circus courier. Pfening Archives.

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CORRECTION

The photo on page 14 of the May-June *Bandwagon* was misidentified. The gentleman in front of the Al Ringling Theater is Pershing Moyle, the theater manager and not Dave Friedman as mentioned in the cut-line. Mr. Friedman's photo appeared on page 38 of the March-April *Bandwagon*.

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THE FAMOUS HOBSONS

A FAMILY OF RIDERS

By John Daniel Draper

In the circus world the name Hobson was the equivalent of professional equestrianism of a high order, well known and respected for several generations. Riding with a vim and a love for the sport that set records for enthusiasm, speed and finesse, the Hobsons never failed to fascinate their audiences. Elaborately costumed, they rode bareback in all styles, both straight and comedy, in principal acts as well as in the *pas de deux* or carrying acts. In comedy riding they showed uncommon disregard for the dangers involved as they somersaulted or vaulted to and from the horses with great acrobatic skill.

The Hobson family would then turn to an entirely different presentation as the Powhaskys troupe, a great novelty Indian riding act. As the whips cracked faster, they rode at accelerated paces in Indian costumes over fire hurdles and did pick-ups from the ground while hanging by one leg from the saddle. All this was presented against a background of burning fires and a tepee village accompanied by Indian yelps and

Homer Hobson in the 1898 Forepaugh-Sells route book.



Clay D. Hobson, the original family member in America. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.

the ceaseless beat of the tom-toms.

As circus performers, the family originated in America with Clay D. Hobson (1840-1919) who started in show business in 1860 with Spalding & Rogers.¹

He and a brother organized the Hobson Bros. Lone Star & Great Sunset Show which started out from St. Louis by wagon in May 1883.² Two years later Hobson had wagons, tents and Arabian horses for sale at Texarkana, Arkansas.

During this period he was also a partner of Sam McFlynn and of Charles Hunter.³

Hobson Bros. New York and New England Circus was on the road in the summer of 1887. C. D. Hobson and Sylvester Hobson were managers and Howard Hobson was the treasurer. Personnel on the show included Homer D. Hobson, Horace W. Hobson, Carl Clair and Dock Miller.

Homer, a native of Vincennes, Indiana, began his circus career troup ing with his father in 1880.⁴ In

1884, together with his father, he was on De Bonnaire's Great Persian Exposition.

Two years later Master Homer Hobson and Uncle Joe Tinkham, bareback riders, advertised they were at liberty. Homer did a principal act with somersaults and Joe did the Pete Jenkins act, as well as being ring master, equestrian manager, and breaker of stock.

In December of 1890, nineteen year old Homer arrived at Texarkana from the Pacific Coast where he had been on the John McMahon Show for the previous three years. Most recently he had been breaking four dapple grays to run in a four horse act for the next season.⁵

For the following five decades, until he retired in 1938, Homer was the mainstay of the riding acts presented by the Famous Hobsons. This long reign included three seasons on Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Circus (1896-1898), ten seasons on Ringling Bros. Circus (1900-1909) and eighteen seasons on Sells-Floto Circus (1910-1925 as well as parts of the 1930 and 1931 seasons). During

Estella Hobson in the 1898 Forepaugh-Sells route book.



these years Homer Hobson became a superb equestrian performer in many roles such as a two horse carrying act, as a hurdle and Roman race rider, as a principal bareback and vaulting jockey rider, and a wild west and Indian rider.

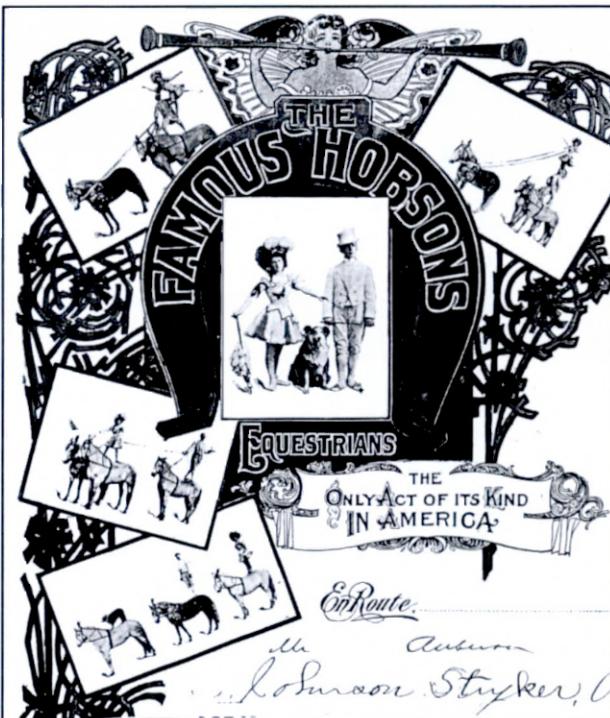
Before joining Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. in 1896, the initial season for that show, Homer was on Sells Bros. (1891, 1895), the Miles Orton show (1892), Hobson Bros. (rejuvenated in 1893) and Orrin Bros. in Mexico City (1894).

In 1893 in Denver Homer married Estella Dreyfuss (1875-1955), a dancer and member of the Earle Sisters act on Hobson Bros. Circus. She had gone there as a performer and ended up marrying the owner's son.⁶

By 1896 Estella and Homer Hobson were working as full fledged partners.⁷ Together they did a carrying act on two horses. Estella was also rider in the ladies' flat races while Homer demonstrated some thrilling hurdle riding. In this latter feat, he shared honors with William "Bud" Gorman and Linda Jeal.

The next year Estella appeared as a fancy, expert and novel manege rider. In addition, she took part with her husband in what was described in the Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. program as an artistic and fancy carrying principal bareback act. This feature was directed by a lady ringmaster, a rather new and revolutionary idea one hundred years ago.

Homer and Estella continued with their two horse carrying act in 1898. By that time Estella had also deve-



This fancy letterhead was used by Homer Hobson about 1908. Circus World Museum collection.

oped as a graceful principal bareback rider.

For the season of 1899 the Hobsons were on the Walter L. Main Circus. In that year the show had heavy financial losses. At the season's end Mr. Main disposed of a part of his equipment at winter quarters in Geneva, Ohio. The Walter L. Main Circus was off the road in 1900, returning to its annual tour again in 1901 on twenty two railroad cars. The Hobsons were again employed on this circus in 1926 and 1927 when it was under the ownership of Floyd and Howard King.⁸

The Hobsons' listing in the 1905 Ringling Bros. Circus program.

The turn of the twentieth century brought the Hobson family to Ringling Bros. where they remained for ten consecutive seasons. The dashing, finished arenic novelties of Estella caused her to be crowned "the peerless queen of principal equestriennes." There were also the extraordinary feats of husband and wife in double riding on two horses.

During the winter of 1901-1902 Homer and Estella performed on Edward Shipp's Winter Circus and then rejoined Ringling Bros. in the spring.⁹ Edward Shipp, the proprietor of the Winter Circus, also served during the regular circus season as assistant equestrian director on Ringling Bros. for the years

1900-1902. Hobsons combined salary on Ringling Bros. for 1902 was \$75 a week for a season total of \$2327 for services extending from April 17th until November 5th. They both appeared as principal riders as well as members of one of a trio of highly attractive dual riders. At the Chicago Coliseum Mr. & Mrs. Hobson rode a pair of Rhoda Royal's magnificently trained saddle horses.¹⁰ In the spring of 1902 Clay Hobson came out of retirement by putting out a small wagon circus in Arkansas.¹¹

Capt. C. D. Hobson again took out a circus, this time the New Model Plate Show, in early 1903. Harry Hobson had a Shetland pony drill. There were ten cages, a ticket wagon and a bandwagon, everything painted white. Among features presented in the daily street parade were one camel, one elephant and twenty

PROGRAMME CONTINUED.

| Ring No. 1. | Stage No. 1. | Ring No. 2. | Stage No. 2. | Ring No. 3. |
|---|---|-------------|--------------|---|
| DISPLAY No. 12.—A Series of Unique, Novel and Varied Equestrian Specialties. | | | | |
| Artistic Double Carrying Act. An Exceptional Equestrian Number. The DeVenes. | An Artistic, New, Novel Riding Number, in which the fair Equestrienne executes a series of Vaults and introduces Artistic Feats of riding upon a speeding Horse, hitched to a vehicle, concluding by the introduction of a remarkable Equestrian Dog in rapid jumps from the ground to the horse. The Hobsons. | | | Beautiful Double Carrying Act on the Backs of Two Fast Running Horses. Artistic Poses, Pictures and Graceful Transactions. Miss Mae Davenport and Mr. Reno McCree. |
| DISPLAY No. 13.—The Clowns' Carnival. A Perfect Whirlwind of Fun and Frolic by a Company of Fifty Comic Fellows. | | | | |

mounted riders. The big top was 90 x 40 feet. The side show was under a 50 foot top and the dressing top was a 30 foot round.

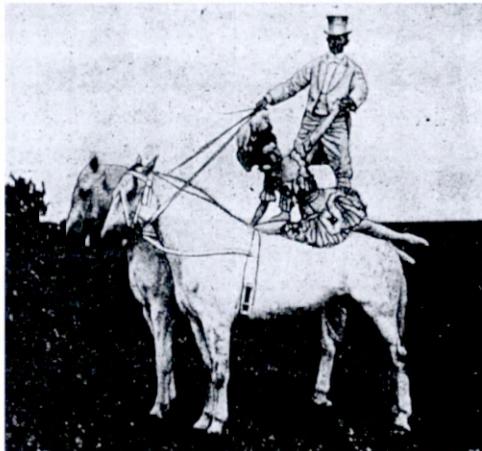
However, Homer and Estella were not on this show. They were spending their fourth summer on Ringling Bros. Circus where they rode in the center ring in one of the three double jockey acts. They also rode in ring 1 in one of the three carrying acts. Although their salary per week had increased by \$5, their total earnings of \$2392 for the year were only slightly greater than those of the previous year. This discrepancy was because they had missed a number of performances during the season. Performers were regularly docked each time they failed to make a performance for whatever reason.¹²

The Hobsons returned to Shipp's Winter Circus for the winter of 1903-1904. On rejoining Ringling Bros. for the summer tour they once more did their regular double carrying act and also a double vaulting equestrian act. During a practice session at Boston on May 28th, witnessed by the equestrian manager Rhoda Royal, a bit of history was enacted when six equestrians jumped simultaneously onto one horse in standing positions from the ground while the horse was in motion in the circus ring. It was the first time in anyone's memory that this feat had been accomplished. The riders went in this order: Frank Eldred, Orrin Davenport, Frank Schadell, Jack Eldred, Homer Hobson and Gil Eldred.¹³

For the next five years Homer and Estella continued with their sensational double jockey act that combined remarkable grace, skill and daring. They also added an unusual equestrian dog.¹⁴ In 1905-1906 they returned to Shipp's Winter Circus.¹⁵

Reputedly the first Shrine show, the Moslem Shrine Circus of Detroit was billed for the Light Guard Armory in February of 1906. The Hobsons performed an excellent equestrian act on this show, entitled Yankee Circus in Egypt.

Later that year on the Ringling show they were riding opposite the Bedini family and the Clark brothers. In display thirteen in the center



The Hobsons used this photo in a New York *Clipper* ad in 1909. Circus World Museum collection.

ring they executed a series of difficult leaps to the back of a speeding horse which was hitched to a light vehicle. They concluded with a thrilling bareback finish ride with the equestrian dog leaping from the ground to the horse's back again and again. Their salary for 1906 had increased to \$100 per week.¹⁶

On February 13, 1909 Homer Hobson wrote the following letter to Al Ringling: "I have a pony which I am breaking in and I would like to take it on the road to finish it up this summer. And I would like to offer you the use of him in parade and tournament for the keep of him. It will be a very great favor to me and I would appreciate it very highly. I will be pleased to hear from you concerning this proposition at your convenience. With kindest regards from us all to Mrs. Al and yourself, I beg to remain Respectfully, Homer D. Hobson 3819 Aidine Place Chicago, Ill."

A reply from Baraboo on February 15: "Replying to yours: It is simply impossible for us to transport or carry any extra horses or ponies the coming season, in fact we are cutting out some of our horses and every pony possible so as not to be over-loaded and our stock cars will be filled up to their utmost capacity. With best wishes, Yours very truly, Ringling Bros."

This exchange of correspondence indicated that although the Hobsons had served for the last nine years as prominent performers on Ringling

Bros. Circus, they certainly had no preferred position with the management when it came to a personal favor.

In that year, their last on Ringling Bros., the Hobsons shared honors with the three McCrees and the Clark brothers in a masterly set of jockey acts. Early in the season the New York *Clipper* reported their riding as being thoroughly interesting and most skillful. "In pink jockey costumes the couple rode single and double, performing their list of tricks with an ease that was delightful to watch and finishing by introducing the riding dog, which sprang upon the back of the horse and thence to the ground with a keen delight in the proceedings. Mr. Hobson's leaps to the back of the running horse from the ground were especially well done and he landed on his feet and maintained his balance without a miss."

Later in display 16, the Hobsons performed a pretty carrying act in ring 3, the lady being balanced in a number of graceful poses. Their riding throughout merited the applause it received.¹⁷

In July an ad informed the industry the Famous Hobsons were at liberty. They were described as the greatest double equestrian act with "Senator," the champion riding dog. The address given was 818 Oak St., W. Hoboken, New Jersey.

An item in the Baraboo, Wisconsin *News* for August 19, 1909 reported that Mr. and Mrs. Homer Hobson were at home in Chicago and had visited Sells-Floto Circus at Chicago Heights. It stated that they had closed with Ringling Bros. three weeks earlier because of Homer's health.

A month later Estella's mother, Mrs. H. Dreyfuss, died at the age of sixty five. That fall Homer and Estella were featured at some western state fairs.

After booking parks, fairs and hippodromes early in the season of 1910, the Hobsons joined Sells-Floto Circus where they performed each year through the autumn of 1925.

Beginning in 1911 Homer and Estella were joined by eleven year old Homer Hobson, Jr. as they presented their principal riding and

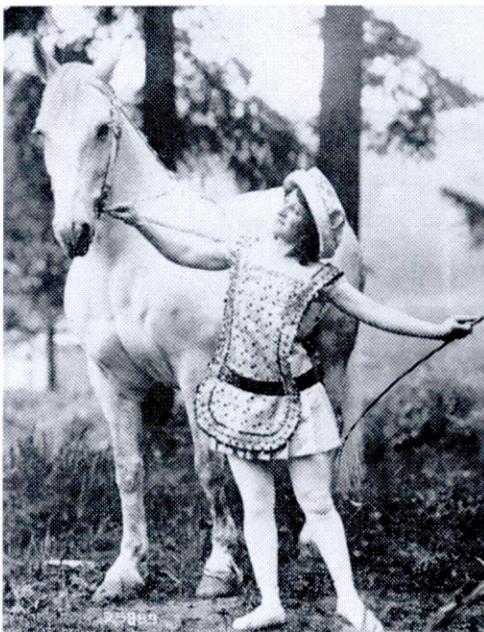
bounding jockey acts in their old time form.¹⁸

The Sells-Floto lady principal riders in 1913 were Estella Hobson (ring 1), Emma Stickney (ring 2) and Emily Stickney (ring 3). The last two were the wife and daughter, respectively, of Bob Stickney, Sr. Principal riding for the men was shared among Homer Hobson (ring 1) in his bounding jockey act, Ab Johnson in center ring with his four horse act and Alexander G. Lowande, principal somersault rider (ring 3). Rhoda Royal's newest "Mephistophelean" equestrian number introduced Homer and Estella Hobson in ring 1, Emily and Emma Stickney in ring 2 and Alexander G. Lowande in ring 3.¹⁹

In 1914 as they rounded out their first five years on Sells-Floto, both Homer and Estella had added wild west riding to their standard repertoire of single and double bareback acts. Incorporating the speed and fleetness of their jockey riding, they introduced all the tricks of wild west riding, hanging head downward from the saddle in pickups from the ground and passing around the neck and belly of the horse as it galloped at full speed.

Homer Hobson, Jr. began his career as a clown rider in 1916 and on October 13th at Pasadena, California he did his first somersault on the back of a horse running in the ring. He was then truly following in the footsteps of his parents. Estella as a principal rider rode opposite Rosa Rosalind, who was on the center stage, and Irene Montgomery in ring 1. Estella, described as the Princess of Equestriennes, she displayed grace and beauteous courage in equestrian maneuvers, pirouetting about the sawdust ring with the lightness and pretty beauty of a fairy.

That year Homer Hobson introduced his Indian riding number which was soon to become famous as the Powhaskys. In one of three identical

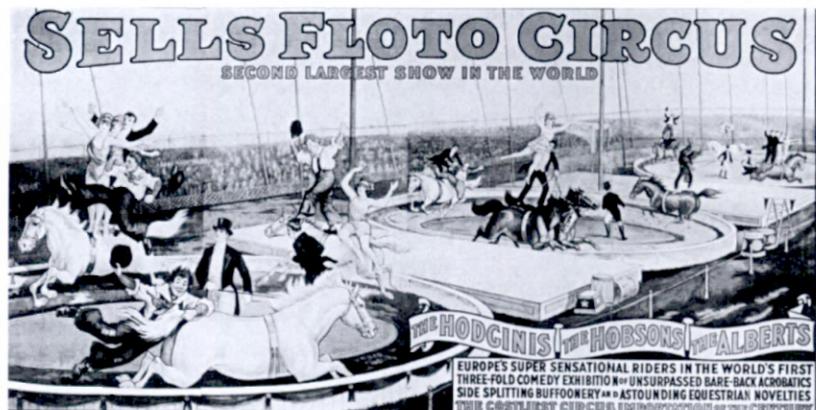


Estella Hobson in a 1913 Sells-Floto Circus publicity photo.

acts, Homer and Estella rode with six Sioux Indians in the center ring. In ring 1 the Indian act was put on by Alden Potter and Irene Montgomery and in ring 3 were the two Darrahs. The Hobson family was now referred to as the Famous Three Hobsons with four horses.

For the next year and through at least 1924 the Indian riding number became a standard feature on the Sells-Floto program. In 1917 Homer, as chief Indian rider, had his group in display 12 in competition with the similar Indian riding of Baraboo George and of the Usarda Troupe (in reality Albert Hodgini's Troupe).

This 1923 twelve sheet Sells-Floto poster pictured the Hodginis, Hobsons and Alberts.



In event 7, the three principal acts included Stella Hobson, Daisy Hodgini (actually Albert Hodgini dressed as a woman) and Irene Montgomery.²⁰

In 1918 Homer, Jr. presented an unridable mule on the revolving table. Prof. Scheck and Simon Rogers worked similar acts in the two adjoining rings.

In display 7 the original Miss Daisy Hodgini rode in ring 1 and Estella and Homer Hobson were in ring 2. Later, Usarda and his Indians were in ring 1 and Powhasky's (Hobsons) troupe of bareback Indians was in ring 2. These two acts, illuminated and dressed with red flames and tepees, featured various feats of juggling on horseback. The riders were mounted on beautiful horses and, attired as Indians, executed an exciting display of horsemanship with sleigh bells on the horses and red fires burning while the band played accompaniments for real Indian war dances. This display was the nearest thing to a double carrying act or jockey act on the show that year.²¹

In 1919 the lady's principal riding was done by the Lloyds, the Hodginis and the Hobsons.

Also, there were three Indian riding troupes, Albert Hodgini's break-neck riders, the Lloyds displaying dare-devilish horsemanship and the Hobsons with their reckless equestrian feats.²²

While wintering in Denver near the Sells-Floto quarters, Estelle and Homer learned in November of the death of Capt. Clay D. Hobson, aged seventy nine. After having finally retiring from the circus business some ten years previously, he had

taken a position in the office of the Texas & Pacific Railroad at Ft. Worth. In addition to Homer, he was survived by five other sons.

Sells-Floto Circus in 1920 featured the great riding acts of Charles Rooney, Albert Hodgini and the Hobsons presented in three dis-

plays in three rings. Display 6 featured in ring 1 the Hobson family in a combination carrying and riding act that embodied the grace and beauty of stately equestrianism and the daring of galloping bareback feats. Daisy Hodgini was in the center ring and Charles Rooney performed in ring 3. Display 10 presented Charles Rooney and his wife in a combination carrying and jockey riding act in ring 1, with the Great Hodgini as comedy equestrian in ring 2 and the Hobsons with their comedy riding in ring 3. As a climax in display 19 there were the almost impossible Indian riding feats of three great troupes--the Rooney's, the Hobsons and the Hodginis.²³

The first mention of Herbert Hobson, the younger son, as a circus performer was in the Sells-Floto route book for 1921. He was eleven years old. Also in 1921 George Hanneford, Fred Derrick and Homer Hobson, Jr. were competing principal riders.

In January of 1921 an interesting ad was placed in *Billboard* by Homer D. Hobson of 5128 Fulton Street, Chicago: "Wants 600 people in the amusement profession with \$200 each to go after oil on a 480 acre tract of land in the State of Texas, where development is just starting. There is no stock company or any promotion stock issued. Among those who have already expressed their willingness to go in on this are: Poodles Hanneford, Orrin Davenport, Fred Derrick, A. Hodgini, Herbert A. Beeson, Rink Wright, James Dutton, Bob Stickney, Jr., Holt and Harvard and numerous others.²⁴ No further references to this \$120,000 deal were found. It is not known if it led to a successful financial venture.

The next year Herbert Hobson debuted as a full fledged rider. The twelve year old boy worked with his brother, Homer, Jr.²⁵ At the Chicago Coliseum date display 6 brought out horses with the Hobson Family, Daisy Hodgini and George and Fred Derrick in one of the finest ensembles of the evening. The riders interpolated with musical balancing. Following the close of this scene, Mme. Bedini, with her two thoroughbreds, "Charcoal" and "Jack Morgan,"



This Floto poster featuring Estella Hobson was used in the early 1920s. The same design was used a different year with Mamie Ward's name.

appeared opposite Victor Bedini with his two chestnut horses. Never did the Madame seem to ride with such perfection and flawless beauty.²⁶

From February 12th to 17th, 1923 Homer Hobson and Charles B. Fredericks directed the Midian Shrine Circus in Wichita, Kansas, where all the Hobsons appeared, including Herbert.²⁷ The Sells-Floto opening for 1923 featured the riding of the Hobson family as well as the Albert and Joe Hodgini families.

The year 1924 represented a full season for the Hobsons with Sells-Floto Circus, beginning with a well developed comedy riding act and the Indian riding act, with knife throwing and juggling, both presented at the early Chicago Coliseum date of the show. Homer, Jr. had the role of clown rider. Other comedy riding was done by the Albert Hodgini troupe and by Irene Montgomery Ledgett.²⁸

For the first couple of months of 1925 Homer Hobson was an instructor in horsemanship at the Cincinnati Riding Academy.²⁹ In the regular season on Sells-Floto Homer Jr. daily threw a backward somersault while standing on a cantering bare-

back horse. In the circus advertising it was highly publicized that he had been raised in the circus business and to date had never been with any other show.

Young Homer Hobson met Juanita Polley (1910-1981) in 1925 on Sells-Floto where she was an iron jaw performer together with the Kimball Sisters, the Le Roy Sisters and Madge Fuller. She was also a Roman race rider. Homer was then twenty five. Juanita was the daughter of Maude Jones Polley, an aerialist, and Charley Polley, a contortionist. Although she had attended a private girl's finishing school, her real love was horses. She early learned to ride in the western saddle and to bulldog calves at roundups.

Eventually her mother divorced Polley and remarried, this time to Pete Bouton, a brother of the magician Harry Blackstone, Sr. Juanita was fond of her stepfather and when she was thirteen or fourteen years of age, she enjoyed being in Blackstone's shows. However, her mother had her apprenticed to Eddie Ward to become an aerialist. Zack Terrell and Jess Adkins, managers of American Circus Corporation shows, were able to get her released from her contract with Ward so that she could do what she really wanted, Roman standing riding, dressage and equestrian high jumping. A cossack troupe on the show taught her how to ride, including the crupper jumps.

In 1925 the Hobsons were again one of the three big riding acts on Sells-Floto. Homer used to watch Juanita do her Roman riding. One day during a practice session the team came apart and she was thrown to the ground. He ran over and picked her up, brushing the wood shavings from her back. Later that year in late August they were married in Clarinda, Iowa.

In helping her develop as a principal rider, John Davenport taught Juanita how to do somersaults on the ground, flipping up into the air and landing back into her wooden clogs. However, she never did somersaults on a rosin-back because of adhesions from a ruptured appendix.

Juanita could not learn from Homer Hobson, Sr. because she

always felt he was angry with her. She also stated that he favored his son, Herbert, over Homer, Jr. In his father's eyes Herbie could do no wrong.

In spite of this situation, Juanita had a real sense of security with the Hobsons because for once in her life she felt that she belonged to a real family. Estella was a wonderful mother for her.

The elder Hobson wanted Juanita to be like Estella who was of the dainty school. However, the younger woman had a hell-for-leather tomboy style, so there was an immediate clash. She never wanted to be pictured as someone other than who she was. She did not want to be portrayed in the style of an European artist, for instance.

Juanita perfected her principal act along the lines of the three traditional parts. First there were the ballet routines on the bareback horse. Next came the leaps over banners. Homer Hobson, Sr. wanted her to use balloons (paper covered hoops) instead of the banners, but she never did. Finally she rode the fast or finish horse doing all the exciting parts, including rapid mounts and dismounts, that she had learned from the Russian cossacks. Also, as was the custom, she made all of her own costumes and beautiful wardrobe including some sixty pairs of cloth slippers.³⁰

In 1926 the five Riding Hobsons, including Juanita, joined the Walter L. Main Circus at Bowling Green, Kentucky on April 20, the second date of the season. The family presented three riding numbers including the comedy riding act, featuring "Tootles" Hobson, and the beautiful Indian riding number. Chief White Bear headed the Indian riders. The Hobsons continued on the Floyd King's Walter L. Main Circus again in 1927, leaving it early in September at Orange, New Jersey.³¹

Two interesting articles were written in 1927 by Earl Chapin May concerning the Hobsons. In one account he wrote: "The one great change upon which troupers comment mournfully is the increasing scarcity of principal riders. Mr. and Mrs. Homer Hobson and their two sons



This photo of Hobson's Tally-Ho wagon appeared in the 1927 Walter L. Main Circus program.

we still have with us. Homer, Sr. has been riding for nearly 50 years. Homer, Jr. and the younger Herbert are first class riders. But they don't seem to be as keen about it as their parents are.

"The principal riding acts follow lines laid down by great artists who have been in their graves a half century. Some say this riding is not so good as formerly but certainly it is of the accepted school."³²

In the second article we read: "Mr. & Mrs. Homer Hobson, Sr. have been in the ring for more than 40 years. Homer Hobson, Jr. and Herbert have been troupers since infancy. Young Homer in clowning is dragged face downward around the ring clinging to the tail of a galloping horse

Estella, Homer, Jr. and Juanita, with Homer, Sr. seated on the Hagenbeck show in 1929.



which frequently kicks cinders or gravel into the clowning equestrian's mouth. We have seen the boy's lips bleed many times but he thrives on rough work of that kind. He also does 'steps off' with the racing finish' horse. The step off is a difficult trick. While one foot of the rider is on the hind part of the moving horse, the other foot must touch the ground. But the second foot must follow rapidly.

"Herbert works with Homer, Jr. made up as a girl. [Quite often in this role he was referred to as Herberta.] He also doubles with the other Hobsons in the Indian riding act. Herbert likes the Indian double best because he has a strong leaning towards the wild west stuff. Herbert does rope spinning (and whip cracking) in the after show or concert. He is just like a westener although the Hobsons have long been residents of Chicago's west side."³³

For the 1928 season the Hobsons deserted the white tops to appear at fairs under the auspices of Barnes-Carruthers Fair Booking Association. In April they also appeared under the sponsorship of Harry La Pearl for the Police and Fireman's Circus in Indianapolis. In a considerably dressed up act that year, a tallyho coach, painted white with a hitch of four black horses, was used to carry the entire troupe of seven into the ring. Homer, Jr., the clown, rode in the coach looking out of the window while the rest of the troupe was perched on top. Evolving from this elaborate entry was a dressage act and then principal riding by the troupe. It soon became apparent that this act was too expensive to produce and transport. Consequently, it was terminated at the end of that season.

On October 29, 1928 Homer Hobson wrote Jerry Mugivan, head of the American Circus Corporation, "Having closed the fair season I am now located for the winter here in Chicago and should you be in need of any riding acts with any of your companies for the season of 1929. I will be pleased to hear from you. I am sir yours truly, Homer D. Hobson 109

North Laramie Ave. Chicago, Illinois."

This letter was returned to Homer with the following note written across the bottom: "Acknowledged, will advise you soon as shows get in which will be soon."

As a result of this inquiry the Hobsons were on Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus for the season of 1929. This was to be the only time they were on this circus except for Juanita, who was principal rider there in 1933. They had a busy season in 1929, opening with the Chicago Stadium Circus, then appearing with Hagenbeck-Wallace from Cleveland to Montreal, and through the entire season, closing on October 27th as a grandstand attraction at the Texas State Fair in Dallas.

The Hobsons and the Albert Hodgini family presented a pair of exceptional riding acts with plenty of snap. The Hobsons also produced an excellent comedy riding act. In September, Homer Hobson purchased a beautiful pinto pony to use in his Indian riding act.

A 1929 photo shows Juanita being carried in *pas de deux* fashion on the shoulder of her husband in clown costume as he rides Roman style bareback in the ring on two white horses. Homer, Jr. used to call this their three high because Juanita was six months pregnant with Homer III at the time the photo was taken.³⁴ Homer Hobson III was born in February of 1930 in Chicago.³⁵

Very early in the 1930 season the Riding Hobsons appeared on Fred Buchanan's Robbins Bros. Circus along with, among others, Gregg's cannon act, Buck Owens, Mickey King and the Flying Concellos.

The riding acts early in the 1930 season on Sells-Floto were the Albert Hodgini family with Harriett doing the pass under the horse's neck, the Hollis-McCree troupe, and the Schwartz sisters from Germany doing a carrying act of grace and skill. The latter act was immensely strengthened by the unique comedy of Otto Griebling.³⁶

Later in the season the Hodgini and the Hollis-McCree acts were replaced by the straight and comedy



Estella, Homer, Sr., Herbert and Juanita, with Homer, Jr. seated on Sells-Floto in 1931. Circus World Museum collection.

riding of the Correias and the Hobsons. The Schwartz sisters as well as the Hobsons were retained through the 1931 season.³⁷

When Sells-Floto came to St. Paul, Minnesota in July of 1930, the July 25th St. Paul *Dispatch* published this interesting account: "The Hobsons--the Homer Hobsons--an old circus family, one of the early ancient ones going back for generations to the founder of the House, are in St. Paul to do a bareback spot in the Sells-Floto Circus which opens at the circus grounds, University Avenue and Dunlap Street, today.

"In the Hobson clan, the eldest son in each generation just automatically gets the name of Homer. In fact, at present there are Homers I, II and III, and they are all bareback riders in the show, too.

"But these numerical distinctions are not just to lend impressiveness to a business card as in some old families the Homers are all called according to number.

"As is the rule in old families the Hobsons follow in the business paths of their forefathers, but in this case not in the footsteps but in the saddles. There's another big difference in this family from the common run of ancient houses.

"Usually when there are four gen-

erations back of a business, a nice easy job can be found for the youngest member of the clan. But not with the Hobsons. These boys grow up with the business and learn to take their falls and turn their somersaults before they ever get a squint at the big tent.

"It all started, this Hobson family, back about 75 years ago when a young farmer boy in Illinois who had just come here from Cornwall, England, sold a string of ponies to a traveling road show.

"Being a conscientious lad, the type to found a House, he wanted to be sure that the ponies were treated as they had been led to expect. So he stuck with them and when he saw circus life he decided it was a good business for a lad as well as a string of ponies.

"Because this boy 'stuck' with his ponies, there are three generations of Hobsons sticking to their horses (literally, not altruistically) in the Sells-Floto Circus. From Homer who is 57 years old and a rider of the old school down to Homer III who is a scant six months old and rides in his mother's arms, the Hobsons still are with their horses.

"Homer I wears a long frock coat and striped trousers when he rides his horses bareback or standing up, while young Homer, all wrapped up in a pink blanket, his riding habit, has his eye on a white paper garde-
nia for his future buttonhole."

The Riding Hobsons presented their merriest and drollest comedy intermingled with hazardous and unequaled feats of horsemanship in the St. Louis Police Circus of 1931. They also did the Indian riding act. At the Detroit Shrine Circus in February the principal lady riders were Lulu Davenport, Rose Wallett and Miss Hobson. The three riding acts were those of Homer Hobson, Sr. and Juanita, the Orrin Davenport troupe and Homer Hobson, Jr. and Herbert. With the Sells-Floto Circus that year the Hobson family and the Schwartz trio were joined by the Albert Hodgini family of riders. Rudy Rudynoff provided the comedy for the Schwartz sisters' act. The Hobsons, with Homer, Jr., the peerless comedian and equestrian, were

billed as "America's premier riding family."³⁸

Although they appeared at the Al Sirat Grotto Circus in Cleveland, the Hobsons were inactive for most of 1932. In April they announced that they had pastured their horses and would not ride until fair time in the late summer and fall.

Again in 1933, with the exception of Juanita, they confined their circus activities to the Al Sirat Grotto Circus and the Detroit Shrine in February where they appeared with the Walter Guice and Davenport riding families. They presented both their comedy riding act and the Indian riding number. Juanita was on Hagenbeck-Wallace as a principal rider for at least part of that season.

For most of the summer Homer Hobson, Herbert Hobson and Grover McCabe, members of the Hobson troupe, took part in "The 49ers Camp" and in "Wings of the Century" at the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago. The program was worthy of the hour it required for it depicted in pageant format the evolution of transportation, real trains, autos, bicycles, steamboats and airplanes with 100 actors and horses.³⁹

During the next three to five seasons, the Hobsons were closely associated with Tom Mix, first in 1934 on the Sam B. Dill Circus and from 1935 onwards the Tom Mix Circus. They had already become acquainted with him on Sells-Floto in 1930 and 1931. By now Estella had retired, having left the circus in 1931. Homer and Herbert with Juanita were in the Hobson family riding act and also in an acrobatic ensemble featuring fine tumbling. Homer, Jr. did the comedy and Juanita and Herbert rode straight.

At Middlesboro, Kentucky during a night performance in 1934, Juanita suffered severe lacerations on her face and arms when she fell from her horse. However, despite intense pain, she worked her usual acts the following day.

In September Homer, Sr. joined the show, working a liberty horse act and performing in a riding act. He also served as a ringmaster. As the route lead through Douglas, Arizona in



Juanita and Homer, Jr. on the Sam B. Dill Circus in 1934.

November, he reminisced over a battle that occurred around 1916 with the armies of Mexico when he was there with the Sells-Floto Circus.

In the fall of 1934 Tom Mix was beginning to assume more control of the Dill show and the name was changed to the Tom Mix Circus. However, Mix did not become sole owner until 1936.⁴⁰ This show continued on the road until the fall of 1938.

In December of 1934 Tom Mix had a vaudeville act at Compton, California where Homer Hobson, Sr. presented a four pony liberty drill. During the 1935 season Homer Hobson and Helen Ford presented liberty ponies. Also, with Ford and Joe Bowers, he performed with leaping dogs. Juanita Hobson, Ella Linton and Herbert did principal riding and the latter was also in the wild west concert with the spinning rope. The Homer Hobson family, consisting of Homer, Jr., Juanita and Herbert, did comedy riding with Homer, Jr. doing his usual clowning. A classic photo of the Hobson act appeared on the cover of August 1935 *White Tops*. There are two men in formal dress and with top hats, one girl and a clown sitting on the horse's neck.

Juanita left the show at Arkansas City to undergo surgery but rejoined

later in the season. While she was absent Ella Linton took her place in the family riding act.

In November Estella arrived at Compton, California from Chicago and took an apartment near the quarters. By December the Hobsons had all their stock at Compton where they had two rings set up for daily workouts.

About this time Homer Hobson, Sr. made an interesting observation about the old time wardrobe which he considered an eyeful. "In the old days we got big salaries so we could afford to buy beautiful wardrobes."

The 1936 Tom Mix Circus was fairly large, particularly for a truck show. Its big top was a 150 three 50s. The menagerie top was an 80 with three 40s and the side show was 130 by 20 feet. That season the show made the first transcontinental tour ever made by a motorized circus.

Homer Hobson, Sr., Helen Ford and Joe Bowers had dog and monkey acts. The lady principal riders were Ella Linton and Juanita Hobson. The Riding Hobsons appeared in display 20. During the last week in August Alfredo Codona and his wife, Vera Bruce, joined the show. Codona became assistant equestrian director and Vera did a single trapeze act.⁴¹

During the next two years Homer Hobson, Sr. remained on the Tom Mix Circus while the rest of the family went to Cole Bros. Circus and later to Robbins Bros. Circus. On the Tom Mix Circus the Riding Hobsons had been replaced by the George Han-never Family.

In 1937 Homer, Helen Ford and Joe Bowers presented dogs and ponies and later in the show Homer, Max Gruber and John Agee worked liberty horses. Homer Hobson, Sr.'s costume that year consisted of a white laced shirt and tight fitting white riding breeches with high black boots, formal black cutaway jacket and a black high silk hat.

The next summer Homer's duties were similar. This time Helen Ford, Ruth Mix and he presented ponies and dogs and the three liberty acts were directed by Homer, Herman Nowlin and John Agee. This time the bareback riding was done by the

with his own shows of which he had several. Two or three different seasons he started wagon shows, and they were always failures financially. His last effort was a boat show which in about '75 or '76 went onto the sands in the Missouri river where they disbanded and the boat never was put in commission again.

Dan Rice's old home was in Girard, Pennsylvania. In the early seventies he had a successful season and in the fall, after the season closed, he went to work and built a beautiful marble monument for himself in the cemetery there, for he said he wanted everybody to know where Dan Rice's last resting place was. He lived to be about 80 years of age. I've forgotten just when he died, but not so many years ago.

In the season of '90 we showed in Boston, Massachusetts for two weeks. On the opening day there, Dan Rice came to the ticket wagon and told me that he had come on to Boston and would be my guest for two weeks. He was a fine looking man, always a good dresser and famous as a storyteller and entertainer, and the salary which Mr. Forepaugh paid him for 26 weeks in '66 was the largest ever paid a single performer in the show business.

Along in the seventies Howes' Great London Show was brought to this country and at the time was probably the finest circus and menagerie that ever was put on the road. It belonged to two brothers, Egbert and Willis [Elbert] Howes, and while they were good businessmen and attended closely to their business, the show commenced to lose money. A few years later they failed, losing everything.

The show was sold out, most of it going to the Barnum and the Forepaugh shows, and shortly after Egbert Howes was given a position with the Forepaugh show, and Willis [Elbert] Howes, who was his twin brother, went to the Barnum show. Both men were door tenders and at that time they were about 60 years of age and dressed exactly alike, and thirty feet away their most intimate friends could not tell them apart. The season that the Barnum and the Forepaugh shows opened together in Madison Square Garden, Willis [Elbert] and Egbert Howes were both



Egbert Howes, former co-owner of the Howes Great London Shows. Al Conover collection.

put at doors on the Fourth Avenue entrance to the Garden. But they did not stay there more than an hour. The crowd in the big entrance would take a look first at one and then at the other and stop and wonder if there could be two men so nearly alike. Before many people got to the show that afternoon, one of the brothers was taken to the other side of the building.

The twin brothers who at one time owned one of the finest shows in the world never regained their old hold again as owners of a great show, but the rise and fall of these two in the business was not unlike that of many others.

But few people in Janesville or Rock Country are aware that one of the finest circus band leaders in the world spent his boyhood days on a farm in the town of Center. This man's name was Ed Minter. His father was a fine musician and his mother's maiden name was Parmeley. They owned a farm in the town of Center, and the musician Ed Minter, Sr. tried there for a time to make a success of farming. One evening he came in from his work and said to his wife, "I don't think it is possible to make a good farmer out of a good fiddler. I'm going to quit the farm and see if I can't get back into the orchestra work again."

He sold out in the town of Center,

but left his family there for a time and went to Cincinnati where he made a contract to furnish an orchestra for one of the best theatres there in those days. He came back and got the family, but on his arrival in Cincinnati found rents were high so he took a trip across what they called Long Bridge over the river to Paducah, Kentucky. Here he rented a home and moved the family.

Ed Minter, Jr. at this time was about fourteen years of age and a fine musician himself. He played second fiddle to his father in the orchestra every evening during the week. In a short time the father died and the boy was given his position as leader of the orchestra. But young Minter was a good student and was trying hard to get to the front in his line of work. A few years later he went to New York where he found a better field. He lead the orchestra in Harry Miner's theatre there in the Bowery for several years and taught music during the day. This he followed for three or four years when he was taken sick and his physician told him he must get out in the open air.

About this time Adam Forepaugh advertised for a leader for his circus band, one who would take full charge, hire his own musicians and discharge them and contract to furnish a band for so much a week. This Ed Minter did and was leader of the band up to the time he died.

The season the Barnum and Forepaugh shows showed together in Madison Square Garden before the engagement closed, Ed Minter was taken home one evening with a severe cold. Pneumonia set in and in a few days he was dead. The funeral was the largest I ever saw for he belonged to a great many musical societies in New York, and there were over 600 people from the Barnum and Forepaugh shows who attended the funeral. There were eighty-six musicians in the band that led the funeral procession, and they marched up the Bowery to the Cooper Institute where those who were on foot dropped out of line, and carriages went on to the cemetery. This ended the career of a great musician whose early days were spent on a farm in the town of Center.

there was no train for Albert Lea until 3 o'clock Monday afternoon. No one at the show knew where I was so I telegraphed that I was stranded and could not get there till Monday afternoon. They broke the locks on my ticket boxes and a new man sold the tickets for the afternoon house. And forever after that I was sure of my connections.

Last Thursday evening my wife and I took a streetcar early in the evening and went down to see the Young Buffalo Wild West and Col. Cummins Far East show and to have a visit with some of the people that we might know. At the main entrance stood William [Frank] Butler, the husband of Annie Oakley, the great rifle shot. Mr. Butler gave us a warm welcome and invited us back to his wife's private tent for a visit with the little woman who has been famous the world over for many years as the greatest lady rifle shot in the world. Just after leaving the front door some one of the bosses in the show called to Mr. Butler and he excused himself, and my wife and I went on to the south of the big pavilion. Here we found a small tent about 15 feet square with the laps all down, but a bright light inside. My friend called out, "Hello Mrs. Butler," and a sweet feminine voice from the inside answered, "In just a second." And almost at the same time she drew back the laps of the tent and greeted us. We were soon seated in easy chairs, and with a smile on her face she said, "Well, Dave, what do you want to know?"

"Well," I said, "I shan't ask you your age, nor as to whether you are a suffragette or not, but in short, I would like the history of your life in about twelve lines."

"Well," she said, "you are not asking much, for you certainly have known something of my life for years back. Of course you know," she said, "that for 17 consecutive years I was one of the features of the great Buffalo Bill show both in this country and in Europe. During my life in the



Young Buffalo Wild West tableau featuring Annie Oakley.

business we have traveled in fourteen different countries, principally with Buffalo Bill, but for a few years Mr. Butler featured me through Europe and for one year we were on contract in Russia for a season at \$1,700 per week and expenses. Mr. Butler and I have always said that we lost money in Russia. We were under no expense and saved all our salary practically, but such a country to travel in. Never again. Well, as for the money that I have made and I will tell you. Mr. Butler and myself never cared much for fine clothes or jewels, and while I have a good many jewels, I seldom wear them. For the most part, they were given to me in different countries all over the world."

She turned to my wife and said, "Mrs. Watt, it is seldom that I have ever worn a dress costing over \$45 or \$50. My hobby has been for many years to do good to some extent to other people. Many years ago I commenced to pick up poor children in the great cities and educate them and put them in a way to earn a good living in an honorable way for themselves. I had a letter in Chicago last week from one of my last wards from Philadelphia saying that she had finished school and had a nice position at \$12 a week. Since I commenced this work I have educated and found good positions for 18 boys and girls," she said, "and the wonderful part of this is everyone of them have made good. And this means more to me than fine clothes or costly jewels."

"Mr. Butler and I own a bungalow

home in the suburbs of Newark, New Jersey, and the corner of the block where we live is said to be just 12 miles from the courthouse in New York City. There it is after we retire from the business that we expect to spend the balance of our days."

While Annie Oakley has not endowed any great college with millions

nor had her name carved over the entrance of a great library, yet in her work she has done as much as any of these. For every dollar that she has used in her work for the betterment of mankind she has earned it all by hard work and from almost every civilized country in the world. Give us more Annie Oakleys and the world will be better. Don't you think?

September 7, 1912

In eighteen hundred and sixty-six, which was the third year that Adam Forepaugh was in the business and before he or P. T. Barnum had become famous in the business, Mr. Forepaugh was looking for a feature of any kind that would draw the crowds. There was a man in those days whose name was familiar all over the United States. This man in the show business today is acknowledged to be the greatest man in his line of work that ever lived, and his name was Dan Rice. While he ran a show of his own for several years, he always worked in the ring, for he was the greatest clown that ever lived.

Adam Forepaugh made up his mind that if he could get Dan Rice for the season of '66 that he would have the greatest attraction in the world. After several weeks of bartering, he closed a contract with him for 26 weeks, and Dan Rice's salary was \$26,000 and his expenses. Mr. Forepaugh told me many a time that this was one of the best deals he had ever made, that it had more to do with putting his name before the people as a great manager than anything he had ever done before or since.

But Dan Rice was never successful

I there found Al and Charlie Ringling, Al being the oldest and Charlie the youngest of the brothers, in charge of the show. I asked them if there was any reason why they passed up Janesville this season and they said none whatever, that it did not happen to be on the route. I also talked to them about their removal from the state and they said, "Yes, we have nailed up every window and door of every building that we own in Baraboo, and they will not be taken down until the laws of the state are different from what they are today." All their show property has been removed to Bridgeport, Connecticut, where they will winter both shows. Charlie Ringling has moved his family to New Rochelle, Illinois, where he will reside in the future. Let us hope that conditions may change so that the greatest show in the world may come back to the old homestead and be one of us.

August 31, 1912

You outsiders of the circus life know but little what really goes on behind the canvas screen that separates the great show arena from the entertainers' quarters. Doubtless your ideas of the life of those strange "nomadic" people are sadly clouded and believe all is gay and happy. You do not know of the many little tragedies, the many little kindnesses, the big heartedness of the men and women who travel from town to town to amuse the public. In my articles I have tried to bring you in touch with some of the real everyday life of the circus people. Have tried to tell you something that the press agents of the big shows forget to write about. During my years with the "white tops" I made many friends and acquaintances, traveled through many states and had many peculiar happenings. These I am recounting for your knowledge.

In the early '80's Kansas City was known as the "City of Hills." Several of their business streets were as steep as a half a mile in length. It was impossible to make parade in Kansas City without using what we called the iron shoe. That was a shoe which fastened on the hind wheel of all the heavy wagons and was held there with a strong chain.

Mr. Forepaugh for many years had

sixteen colored horses which were always driven on the big band chariot. At the top of one of these long hills in the business district they had adjusted the big shoe and had only got barely started down the hill when the chain broke and the heavy chariot with twenty-six musicians in it rushed onto the horses and they all started on a run. The driver knew it would be fatal to keep them straight ahead on such a long steep hill, so he turned them at the first street, and on the corner of the side street was a round, glass front drugstore. The driver was in hopes to make the turn and keep his wagon right side up, but in this he failed. The wagon went over directly in front of the drugstore and about half the musicians with their horns went through the big glass front and landed in the drugstore. Four or five of the horses got tangled up and fell and several of the musicians were badly cut by the glass, and four of them had to be taken to the hospital.

Word was sent to the show grounds to Mr. Forepaugh and he told me to take his horse and carriage and plenty of money with me and not to come back until I settled everything in full; that they would look there after the starting of the show, for in case of damage of this kind, Mr. Forepaugh always wanted a quick settlement. I was on the ground in a few minutes and I found the druggist to be one of the finest men I ever met, and in less than an hour's time, I had settled with him in full, and for several hundred dollars less than it might cost had he not been ready to do everything that was right. He said it was purely an accident with no one to blame and all he wanted was enough to replace his front and lost goods. I paid him \$650 and sent four of the musicians to a hospital and about two weeks later they joined the show again. But after that if there was a steep hill anywhere in the line of parade, you would always

find twenty-six German musicians walking to the foot of the hill. No more chances of that kind for them. But Kansas City was always one of the banner towns of the west, and after all the expense that day, the show left with several hundred dollars to the good.

This same year while on our way west we were billed to show in Waterloo, Iowa on Saturday. My mother and oldest sister lived at Hampton only about 30 miles west of Waterloo. I sent word for them to come to the show as I had not seen them in several years. They were Methodists of the old school and never had seen a circus, but came on as mother said only to visit me. Everybody around the show knew they were coming and there was an elegant dinner served in the officer's cook tent in their honor. Some of the best seats in the show were reserved for them and their friends. Every attention possible was shown them and when they left for home in the evening, mother said to me, "I don't blame you for being with the circus. They are the nicest people that I have ever met."

We had a Sunday run from there to Albert Lea, Minnesota. About 1 o'clock that night while visiting with the railroad agent, he told me I could get a train in about half an hour for Hampton where my mother and sister lived, and at 4 o'clock Sunday afternoon could get a train for Albert Lea so that I could spend nearly all Sunday at home. I took his word for it, took the train for Hampton and arrived there about 2 o'clock Sunday afternoon. I went to see about my train for Albert Lea and they told me



learned to sing and dance and later worked in all the different concert halls in New York City in the winter. In the spring of '74 Sadie came to Philadelphia and asked Mr. Forepaugh for a position in the concert and said she was willing to ride in parade and the grand entry as well. Sadie was hired and that was her home up to the time Mr. Forepaugh died.

In '78 at Fremont, Neb., the show closed the season proper and reorganized with as few performers as possible to go to Oakland, California, where they would winter and start out in '79. As they only showed three times in crossing the desert to California, as few performers as possible were taken through. Sadie Connelley with hundreds of others was paid off in Fremont and was supposed to leave that night for New York City. She said nothing but went downtown and bought herself a basket, filled it with lunch enough to last her a few days and started down the tracks looking for the flat car that had the band wagon on it. There was a canvas cover tied over the wagon and Sadie climbed up on the flat car, loosened the corner of the cover, and crawled onto the band wagon.

The first run out of Fremont was about 375 miles without a stop except to change cars. Monday morning about 9 o'clock the trains all stopped, unloaded everything, fed and watered the stock, put up the cook tent and fed the people. When everybody had got seated at breakfast Sadie Connelley walked in and said, "Good morning, Mr. Forepaugh. I thought some Saturday evening of going to New York, but I changed my mind, knowing that you would need me badly for this trip."

Mr. Forepaugh only smiled and said, "Well, Sadie, you are too far from New York now. I suppose I'll have to take you through to the coast."

Sadie put in the winter at San Francisco and Oakland and came east in the spring with the show. After Mr. Forepaugh died Sadie was engaged by the Barnum people for she was a valuable woman with the show. But every salary day Sadie would say to me, "This don't seem like home. I wish I could do something else."

About he middle of August I got a letter from a friend, W. D. Coxey of Chicago, asking me for a woman to support Gus Hague who was the greatest Swedish impersonator in the business. I showed the letter to Sadie and said to her, "Here is your chance. I will telegraph Coxey I have the right woman and the salary is \$55 per week." Mr. Coxey telegraphed back, "Send Miss Connelley to Chicago at once."

She left that night for Chicago and after rehearsing for about two weeks they got started on the road. They played in the larger cities through to the coast and later in the winter opened for two weeks in Chicago. I went to Chicago to see the show and they were playing to standing room and Gus Hague and Sadie Connelley had three curtain calls that night. This was called the Ole Olson Company, Gus Hague being the greatest impersonator in the world and Sadie Connelley was certainly the best supporter. In all these years Sadie every week sent a substantial sum to New York to care for her old mother and crippled sister.

The evening of the opening of the carnival company that was here a few weeks ago, I walked down to the show lot and before I had been there more than a minute, a gentleman stepped up to me and called me by name. He said, "Dave, don't you know me?" I said, "No, I don't." "Well," he said, "my name is Ed Backentoe. [Backenstoe?] You got me a job in '84 with the Forepaugh show when I was only 14 years old. The first thing I did was to take care of Rose Stickney's trained dogs. The next spring I went to work on ring stock and was there four years. That is where I got my insight from Adam Forepaugh, Jr., whom I assisted while he was training horses."

Mr. Blackentoe trained the wonderful mare Mazeppa that he had with the show and he told me that he had been 15 years getting this show together a little at a time. He said to me that next spring he would start out a circus and menagerie of 22 cars playing the

smaller towns.

"And by the way, Dave," he said, "did you hear of the fate of your old friend Jim Jordan?" Jim sold outside tickets for the Forepaugh show for 22 years. They were tickets that sold for 60 cents, 10 cents in advance of the regular price by people who chose to buy them rather than get in the crowd and rush at the ticket office. "Well," he said, "he with two other friends were touring Europe and made up their minds to come home on the great new boat, the Titanic. And, Dave," he said, "that was the last of poor Jim Jordan and his two friends for they went down with the boat."

On Wednesday last I went to Rockford to see the great Ringling show and I could not help but think of the difference between the show that day and in the fall of '85 when I drove across the country from Clinton, Wis., to Edgerton where the show closed the season. Then it was a small wagon show with one ring, but always clean and well managed. At Edgerton they closed the season and drove across the country to the winter quarters in Baraboo, but today the canvas is 485 feet long and 185 feet wide with a seating capacity of many thousands, and at Rockford every seat was taken.

When you come to think that you can see animals from every country in the world, the finest trained animals of all kinds, the finest riders, acrobats and aerial performers that it is possible to procure, and in addition see the beautiful production of "Joan of Arc" with beautiful music and costumes that would do credit to any grand opera company to think that it is possible to see all this for fifty cents, is it not enough?



this telegram was used as evidence in the suit. Soon after the settlement had been made with the company, the enthusiastic agent who thought he was only doing his duty, lost his job.

Shortly after the wreck many of the elephants were loose in the woods and seven or eight of them got together and put in an old abandoned log hut which stood close by the railroad. A little later one of the bosses of the show got too much moonshine whiskey aboard and commenced making trouble. John A. Forepaugh, the manager of the show, took three or four husky men and caught him and put him in the log cabin with the elephants where he told him he must stay till he got sober. While his pleadings were pitiful, he had to remain there till 4 o'clock in the afternoon. When let out, he was thoroughly sober and stayed with the show for several years, but no more moonshine whiskey for him.

Probably few people in Janesville are aware that one of the largest hippopotamus in the world was captured in Rock River at the entrance of Spring Brook. This hippo known as "Big Ben" belonged to the Burr Robbins show. In the early spring he was let outside of his cage to walk around for exercise, and the first thing the boss animal man knew, he was in the river. "Big Ben" was not a dangerous animal and usually was handled, but the river seemed to be to his liking and he refused to come out. They got several towboats and a dozen men and finally surrounded him and drove him to shore.

Several years ago a young Irishman by the name of Charles McCarthy came to the Forepaugh

show and hired out as a clown. He made good and stayed with the show till the time Mr. Forepaugh died, and while he was there many years, "Little Carty," as he was familiarly known around the show, always knew his place. He never got it into his head that because he had been there many years that he owned the show. Always knew that he was only a clown. Two or three years after Mr. Forepaugh's death I met him in Kohl & Middleton's museum on Clark Street in Chicago and consumption had gotten hold on him and it difficult for him to keep to work. He said to me, "Dave, I have had to carry an awful load this summer and it has all been uphill, but unless I get better, it will soon be over." A few weeks later he was taken to a hospital in Chicago where he died soon after. Show people all over the country contributed liberally to pay his funeral expenses and he was buried in Chicago where hundreds of show people attended the funeral, for everyone liked "Little Carty," and if there is any difference in the seats in heaven "Little Carty" has certainly got one of the soft ones.

August 24, 1912

As a prelude to Mr. Watt's tales of bygone days under the White Tops, the following item may be interesting to those who are following with interest the circus stories as they appear each week. People of the village of Wauconda, about forty miles northwest of Chicago, besides collecting a fund for the erection of a monument to the memory of a country doctor of the vicinity, the late James Dawson, have already constructed a modest granite shaft in honor of a circus actor who died almost in their sight while amusing them. He was Charles

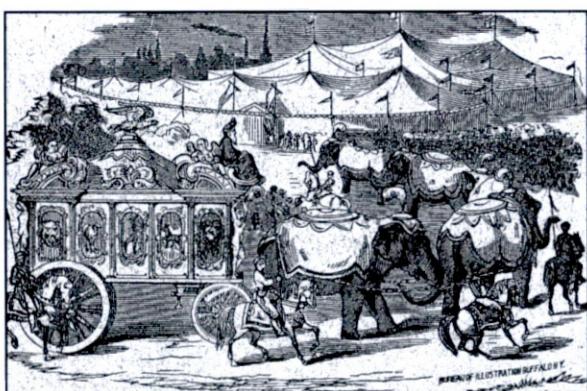
Ward, a trapeze artist with a traveling one-ring circus of the old-fashioned type, moving from place to place in wagons. In the quiet, shaded little Wauconda cemetery is Ward's grave and above it stands a headstone with the inscription, "To Charles Ward, July 16, 1912. From the Citizens of Wauconda." Ward went to Wau-

conda July 16 last with a traveling dog and pony show. He was one of the star actors. Running away from home at boyhood, lured to the sawdust ring by its enchantments, he was 40 years old. Nothing is known of his past or whether he had kin or kin living.

Two weeks before the circus came to Wauconda, Ward was warned by a physician that he had a severe case of heart disease and must not act again. "What else can I do?" he asked, with actor's fatalism. "That's all I know how to do now--act on the flying trapeze. I guess I'll have to stick it out." On the night of the show at Wauconda, Ward had just finished his act. He was sliding down a rope from his aerial perch when he was seen to stiffen and fall to the ground. He died within a few moments. A Chicagoan named Sharde, a summer resort visitor at Wauconda, dismissed the audience. Wauconda had never seen or heard of Ward before. He had no claim on the village or its citizens. Nevertheless, by Sharde, a subscription list was at once started and soon a sum sufficient for the modest headstone was raised, over fifty persons giving small sums. Fellow actors bought a lot in the cemetery and paid for the burial. Rev. John Hallock of the local church preached the sermon. Two weeks later Wauconda had erected the monument to the memory of the man who had amused them, dying while at his appointed task.

Many years ago in New York City a laborer by the name of Connelley was killed by the falling of a big timber from a building being erected. Connelley left a wife and two little girls, two and five years old, named Nellie and Sadie. Sadie was the oldest, but Nellie, the two year old, was a cripple. Mrs. Connelley was left penniless with the two little girls to care for. In looking around for something to do, a kind hearted merchant on one of the busy comers of the great Bowery in New York said to Mrs. Connelley, "You can have room here on the corner in front of my store to open an apple stand." This Mrs. Connelley did, and for more than 40 years after was known as "Mother Connelley, the Apple Woman of the Bowery."

Sadie helped her mother the best she could around the apple stand, having little education, but she



in the show business and I thought they might interest you.

August 17, 1912

Just how the "Kansas White Heifer" came to be a part of the great Adam Forepaugh show is told by Mr. Watt in this week's tales from circus life. The great "Kansas White Heifer" was unlike many of the circus freaks; it was natural and nothing made up about it. The tale Mr. Watt relates as to its purchase shows how alert circus men are for new features. The little tale that is told of McCarthy, the former clown in the Forepaugh show, by Mr. Watt, is merely an sample of the fellowship that exists between men and women that live half their lives beneath the white canvas roofs. There is a bond that cannot be broken even after years of separation, and there are no more liberal hearted people than these self same circus folks when it comes to aiding a companion in hard luck. Some years ago Dexter Fellows and Joe Brogan, both of them members of the administration staff of the Buffalo Bill show at that time, spent a winter in Hot Springs, Arkansas. One day they met a worn out, dilapidated specimen of humanity on the streets of the city, who greeted Brogan with a Howdy. Brogan looked at him and discovered he was a former daredevil cowpuncher who had been with the show for one season.

Worn out, almost dead from the disease that had taken hold of him, he was a pitiful object. Both Brogan and Fellows emptied their pockets for his immediate relief, and not satisfied, passed among other circus folk who were wintering at the resort and soon collected a goodly sum to pay his actual expenses for some months to come. That they saved his life and he ultimately recovered and probably is alive today for their work of love is but incidental to the tale. It illustrates the spirit shown by these men of the "tents" to each other.

The life of the average circus man is not all parade and glory. There is good hard work connected with it. The work of the day is sometimes followed by the labors of the night. Traveling on the special trains does not preclude sudden accidents, wrecks and death to beasts and employees. Loss of time means loss of

money, hence the transportation bureau of a big show must be arranged most carefully.

Mr. Watt has told us of travel by land, overland through mud and rain, with food for man and beast scarce and now he relates an accident which happened down in Tennessee in which there was loss of life and the escape of animals from the cars in which they were stored. He also relates an incident of the old Burr Robbins show when it used to winter here and how they handled their animals in winter quarters.

In the middle of the eighties, I think '86, we showed in Topeka, Kansas on a Thursday, the same week that they were holding the state fair. It was said that on that day they sold over 52,000 tickets at the grounds. It was one of the hottest days that I ever saw, the thermometer hovering about the 100 mark and no breeze stirring. We did the turn away business that afternoon and evening in spite of the awful weather. Our show ground was about half way between the city and the fairground on the main road where the dust and dirt was terrible. I had just got through selling tickets for the afternoon house when Mr. Forepaugh drove around to the wagon and said for me to lock up everything and go out to the fairground with him as he had some business there to look after. I said to him I could not go, I had work enough there for four men, but he insisted. I got in the carriage and we drove to the fairground and he finally brought me up in front of a big sideshow tent and the banner in front claimed that they had the largest cow in the world. He told me go in and take a look at her and if I thought she was worth it, I could hold the horse and he would go in. I came out and took charge of the horse and told him to go inside and not come out till he had bought her. He went in and took a look at her and asked the farmer what he would ask for such a critter. The owner said if

he sold her he would sell tent and everything with her and that the price would be \$5,000. Mr. Forepaugh said to him, "Isn't that a good deal of money for a cow?" The farmer said, "Yes, but isn't she quite a cow?"

Mr. Forepaugh had not been gone more than 15 minutes when he came out and said to me, "I have bought the cow." One of the big 60 foot box cars was fixed up like a palace and the cow known as "The Kansas White Heifer" was one of the features of the show from then on. The salary list for the sideshow with its giants, midgets and curiosities was \$1,750 per week and the Kansas heifer, the only attraction in her tent, took in as much money as the other sideshow until the time she was killed on the Louisville and Nashville road in Tennessee later in the fall. She was four years old, the bills said, and she weighed 4,250 pounds, and no one who ever saw her doubted it.

In this week on the Louisville and Nashville road we not only lost the Kansas heifer, the great feature of the show, but a great number of horses, three people killed and several



others badly hurt. It happened at 3 o'clock in the morning. The middle section of our train stopped at a water tank, and no one was sent back to flag the third section which telescoped it. The entire day was spent there in the Tennessee woods at the water tank, for we were 13 miles from the town that we were to show in that day which we lost entirely.

About 10 o'clock that morning Mr. Forepaugh got a telegram from the agent in the town in which we were to show to make the town if possible for there were 20,000 people waiting to see the show. Later Mr. Forepaugh sued the company for damages and

A panic ensued and the people went in every direction, but fortunately no one was seriously hurt. In the elephant tent there were 29 elephants, and they went on a rampage and started in all directions and we were unable in the darkness to find but 22 in time to load up and leave for the next town.

We left men and cars back, and as soon as daylight came a search was made for the other seven. They had gone in different directions and that afternoon two were found about three miles south of Fremont in the river bathing. The other five had gone in different directions and every few hours a farmer would come in on horse back and tell that he saw an elephant in his neighborhood. Some had gone as far as eight miles away, and it was three days before they were all gotten together and shipped on to the show. It was fair to say that many of the farmers and their families slept in the top stories of their houses.

When young Forepaugh and his assistants found the two in the river they got boats and started out to bring them in. When they would get near them, they would fill their trunks and throw the water all over them. They were four hours before they could get them ashore.

The burning of the canvas did not delay the show for we always carried duplicate tents and the show opened the next day just the same, only that we were seven elephants short.

In '79 with the Burr Robbins show we were touring the northern part of the state by wagon and on Saturday showed in Black River Falls. We were to have a Sunday drive to Tomah, Wis., a distance of 40 miles. This was one of the hardest times that I ever had with a wagon show, for it was a dead pull through the sand almost the entire 40 miles. We had breakfast on the lot at 2 o'clock and at the hotel at 3:00 and immediately started for Tomah. I told Delavan, the boss hostler, to keep everything together and keep pulling till he overtook me. I was going ahead to pick

out a place to camp and feed and rest up for three or four hours during the middle of the day.

Johnnie Smith, who was the leader of the band as he had been several years, rode with me to Tomah. We rode 22 miles of the 40 before we could find a farm house where we could buy hay and grain for the stock. As I pulled up in front of the little farm house, a small man came out to the gate and I said to him, "Are you the boss?" And with a half smile on his face he said, "When me wife's not at home."

His name was Noonan and he and his wife lived there alone. I told him who I was and what I wanted and that I would pay him well for feed enough to feed our stock. While the men who had charge of the cook tent had plenty to feed the working men, there were 56 performers with the show who he had to provide for. He said he had plenty of salt pork, chickens and eggs, but his wife could not cook for so many. I told him there were several good cooks with the show and if he would sell me the material, we would do our own cooking.

This they did, and as soon as the show arrived which was about 10 o'clock, everybody went to work getting dinner. Some of the women went to making biscuits, others picking chickens and that was one of the best picnic dinners that I ever sat down to. Nobody enjoyed it any more than Mr. and Mrs. Noonan.

We stayed there till about three and then pulled out for Tomah, a distance of 18 miles. After the show had all gone away and I had settled with Mr. Noonan, he said to me, "Mr. Watt, I think me wife and I will have to come to Tomah for breakfast. I don't think there is anything left in the house."

I said to him that I would be glad to have them come to Tomah and be my guests

for the day. They said they would, get up early and drive in the next morning. I said to them that I would have breakfast ready for them at the hotel at 7 o'clock. I told the landlord at the hotel to have breakfast for three at seven sharp for I had two guests that were to drive from the country and have breakfast with me. At 6:30 he came up and called me and he said, "Breakfast will be ready in a few minutes and your guests are downstairs waiting for you."

They had breakfast with me at the hotel and dinner at the cook tent and stayed for the afternoon show and when they started for home, they said to me, "This is two days that we certainly have enjoyed ourselves and hope sometime we will see you again." And I hope they are still living for if a couple could live in that sandy, desolate place and still keep smiling, which they did, they certainly should live on.

Late in the season the same year, we went into Illinois and there struck the fall rains. It rained almost constantly for two weeks. We got down to what was known as the Wabash Flats and here the Wabash river had overflowed its banks and in places was a mile wide. We had a pilot to take us over the road for the water was anywhere from six inches to six feet on both sides of the bridge. Mr. and Mrs. Robbins started early and while in about the center of the road and at least half a mile from the show, their whipple trees to the carriage broke and the team ran away, leaving them stranded there in the water. I overtook them in a few minutes and their driver and I unhooked my team and hitched them on their carriage, patched it up the best we could and got them ashore. Then had to drive my team back and bring my carriage on.

Mrs. Robbins was never away from the show, always took tickets at the front door, afternoon and evening. In any kind of trouble during the show, she was always one of the bravest and was certainly fitted for the business.

But we did not mind the hardships as much then for the show was to close a few days later at Harvard, Ill., where it rained all day, afternoon and evening. These instances or similar ones were constantly coming up



7 o'clock I went back into the caboose and visited with the conductor. Every mile or two we would run by large embankments of earth thrown up, and I asked him if those weren't put there during the late rebellion.

He said, "Yes, sir, and I helped myself to build more or less of them for fifty miles out of Richmond, but every day the Northern boys would drive us back into Richmond."

This year we had about 75 Indians with the show. They were government subjects and came from their reservation in the far west. We were under bonds to send them back to the reservation and the work fell on me to bring them as far west as Chicago and ship them on from there. They were not the easiest people in the world to handle, but they were all crazy to go back to the show for another year. So Mr. Bailey got an interpreter and the head ones that could understand a little English and brought them out to the ticket wagon and told them he had sold the show to me and that if they all behaved well till they got across Chicago and started for their reservation, there was no doubt but what I would put them all under contract for the next year.

Richmond was about 85 miles from Washington, D.C., and from there I put the Indians in a car by themselves which was hitched onto the Limited on the Baltimore and Ohio railroad and left Washington city for Chicago at 11:15. Everything went fine till late at night the conductor came and woke me up and asked me if I wasn't the Indian man. He said, "Get up quick and go back into that car." He said they were drinking and throwing bottles through the windows. I naturally knew who the distributors were and went back in the car and crossed their names off of the list and told them they would have to stay on the reservation the coming summer as we could not afford to have trouble makers with the show.

Everything was quiet after that till morning; and when I had my breakfast, they sent for me to come back into the car and all begged to be allowed to come back the next season. I told them if they behaved and would not drink anymore till they got across Chicago and started for the west, I would fix it so they could all



Adam Forepaugh, Jr., equestrian director of the 1891 show.

come back. When I bade them good-bye in Chicago, the interpreter said they wanted me to write every week when the show would open in the spring. But this was the last of poor Lo, for this was the last season that they had Indians with the show.

This year there were several young papooses with the show and on long Sunday runs and especially at the end of a division of the railroad when we would change engines and crews, the mothers of the youngsters would sit out on the flat cars and as the curious crowd would gather around, she would hold up one hand and say, "Five cents." I have known them to take in as high as \$4 at a station at 5 cents for a look at the papoose.

This was a very successful season financially and the new management made more money in seven months of the show than it cost them to buy it. And this was my last season in the show business, and if the few insights of show life which I have endeavored to give you have interested you, I'm glad.

August 10, 1912

In the series of articles written by David Watt for the Gazette during the past few weeks, Mr. Watt has taken his readers through his many

years' connection with the business end of the various circuses he was connected with. That his stories have been most interesting and entertaining is certain, and those who have looked for this Saturday feature will be pleased to read some of the incidents that happened, happenings that never were read in print, and many of them ones even the most subtle press agent forgot to write.

Circus life is not all shiny spangles and gilt. It is good hard work. Many successful performers of the sawdust arena are men and women who are like everyday mortals. They take care of themselves, they work hard and faithfully, and if they smile while tidying about the ring in gay costume, it is part of their profession. Their work is hard, their hours long, but if you have ever been fortunate enough to slip behind the canvas wall of the dressing room, you have found the bespangled lady of the ring is very much of a woman interested in women's affairs and most often working some dainty bit of fancy work or reading a volume of the latest novels.

Most often the noted performers come from families of interest that have long been noted for their acrobatic or equestrian acts. They have been brought up to the work and take as much interest in their success as others in various lines of work. The same is true of the men. The clowns may be solemn visaged men in everyday life who take life most seriously, men who are profound thinkers on many subjects and well read. They are sober and industrious and when they retire from the life, they usually have sufficient for their old age.

Mr. Wait has had a rare opportunity to meet and know these nomadic people. His long experience with the managerial end of the circuses has given him a rare insight into the characteristics of the people who live and work beneath the "big tops." In his articles that are to come he will take his friends, the public, into the mysteries of the circus life as they could not otherwise travel.

One year with the Forepaugh show while showing in Fremont, Nebraska, a terrific storm came up in the evening just after the performance had commenced and the lightning struck the big top and in ten minutes it was burned to the ground.

SIDE LIGHTS ON THE CIRCUS BUSINESS

PART TWO

By David W. Watt

August 3, 1912

In the following article by David W. Watt, the last year of existence of the old Adam Forepaugh show with the old employees, the acts and route as planned by the famous old showman who passed away just as the season was about to open. This year marked the end of Mr. Watt's active participation in circus affairs. His ten years with Mr. Forepaugh were replete with interesting incidents and in future articles Mr. Watt will give the readers of the Gazette a few of them.

In describing the sale of the circus Mr. Watt neglected to make one fact clear, that was the pure accident that he did not become one of the owners of the show when it was to be sold. According to Mr. Forepaugh's will, the show was to be sold to the highest bidder and the proceeds divided between his widow and son. As no bidders appeared up to noon of the day fixed for the sale, it had been practically decided that Mr. Watt and young Forepaugh should make a bid for the property, give their notes for the amount and with usual successful seasons, would have been able to pay the whole amount in a few years. However, at the last minute the bid of Bailey and his partners came in, and this ended the plan of Forepaugh and Watt as it was higher than the price agreed upon for their sale.

On January 24th of the year eighteen hundred and ninety, Adam Forepaugh died and by the will the great show had to be sold with all its belongings for the most that could be got for it and the proceeds divided equally between the young widow and the son. The refitting for the year, the engaging of the people and all the paraphernalia that went to make up the show had been completed so there remained but little to do but set up the show and take the money. But for all this, it seemed

that there were no purchasers. The only one that made any offer for it was Cooper and Bailey and the Barnum show. They had been partners many years before, and in the early [mid] seventies took a show around the world.

With this purchase they had to take all contracts made by Mr. Forepaugh for people for the coming season. I had no written contract with the show, for mine for ten years had always been verbal. So the new purchasers notified me they could find no contract for me and that I need not come on as they could not use me. But I soon found out that a verbal contract was as good as any if you had been used to working that way, and I immediately notified them that I would be there in ample time. I went on early in April about two weeks before the time for the show to open. They opened the show in the afternoon with new men in the wagon, and they soon got things mixed up so they were glad to have me get in and sell the night house. And from then on I was always considered a fixture with the show for the season.

The new management made many changes so that the old show in many ways did not seem like home. The new management knew their business and ran the show high class in every way. Yet many an old timer would come around to the ticket wagon and tell me that Mr. Forepaugh would not do this and that. But nearly all the old men were kept and were well paid and well used for years after. This put the two great shows in the hands of the Barnum people so that

there was no division of country or dispute as to territory.

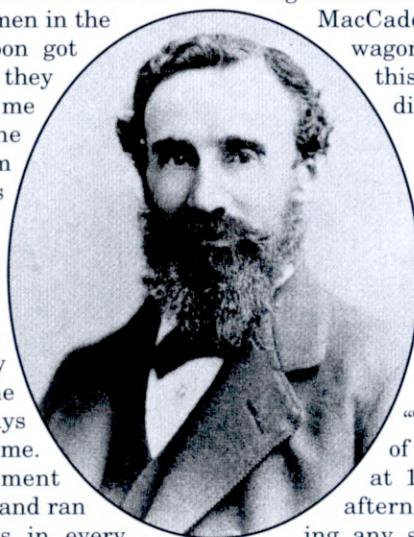
Adam Forepaugh, Jr. was engaged for two seasons as equestrian director at a salary of \$10,000 a season and also broke new horses and other animals for new acts for the coming year. Joseph T. MacCaddon, who was a brother of Mrs. Bailey, was acting manager of the show. The show started east this season, crossing into Canada for a few weeks and later south. At Clarkesville, Tenn., just after the opening of the evening show, a desperado from the mountains rode up to the front door and shot one of the door tenders. He whirled his horse and quickly got away so that there was no telling who he was or why he did it. The door tenders all left the front door and things didn't look good to me so I put out my lights and closed up the wagon. A minute or two later Mr.

MacCaddon came to the wagon and said, "Open this wagon up immediately."

James E. Cooper, proprietor of the Forepaugh show in 1891. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives.

I said to him, "The next opening of this wagon will be at 1 o'clock tomorrow afternoon. Nothing doing any sooner." I immediately went to the sleeper and the few people that went to the show after that paid their money at the front door.

We closed the season about the middle of November at Richmond, Va. We were late getting into Richmond in the morning, and about



after his agent dealt out passes to the "typos" of that newspaper. "The boys were so glad that joy beamed from their countenances," a writer exaggerated, "as they put their 'precious memorials' of Dan's philanthropy in their pocket, and went to their cases muttering blessings on the head of the Prince of the 'Paris Pavilion.'"⁴⁰ An item indicated that the tent was attended by an audience largely composed of ladies, "whose delicate ears were saluted with nothing that could possibly put a blush on their fair cheeks."⁴¹ Orphan children of the city, irrespective of "race, color, or previous condition," were guests at the Saturday matinee.

The tour continued for another month. The routing took the show into North and South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama, then ended at Mobile for an advertised four days beginning January 22. No performances were given on the 25th, however, because of inclement weather. Two more days, the 26th and 27th, were added to the stand, for which the Fiji Cannibals were a new attraction; but, unfortunately, a cold, drizzling rain, which left the streets muddy to the extreme, spoiled these closing nights. On January 28 the Rice outfit was set up in New Orleans at Trivoli Square, the first of various locations in that city that would be visited until closing on February 23. And so, farewell!

The circus equipment that was stored in Baltimore remained there until 1873, when it was transferred to another warehouse until it was put up for auction to cover the storage charges on Monday, August 24, 1874. On this day a crowd of about 500 people attended, primarily made up of the curious who often gather at similar functions, and the bargain hunters, or, to be more explicit, junk dealers.

Three years in storage had not improved the value of this circus property. Several tents and a large number of seats were in shabby condition—the chairs being moldy and the canvas so rotten that it was unsuitable for anything but paper mill stock. On the other hand much

of the carpeting, most of which had been stored in boxes, was in good condition.

The bidding was at no time heavy and the returns were what one might expect. About 1,000 of the cane-bottomed chairs in fairly good condition sold for 35¢ each, five hundred of the settees for 37 1/2¢ each; tent poles, gas fixtures, and old carpeting, put up together, \$150; about 3,000 pounds of old canvas, comprising sev-

eral small tents, 10 1/2¢ per pound; 300 pounds of Brus-sels carpeting which had been used in the ring, \$34 for the lot; a complete small tent, \$9; 500 yards of royal velvet carpet used for the

parquet and the private boxes brought \$1.65 a yard; and several other odds and ends probably totaled \$100. The final result of the sale could not have added up to more than \$2,500, far short of the original cost of the items, which was estimated between \$10,000 and \$12,000.⁴² So much for Rice's noble experiment, dismembered and forgotten, as its artifacts faded into anonymity.

NOTES

1. John C. Kunzog, *The One-Horse Show*, self-published 1962, pp. 269-277. He used no citations in his text.

2. *Ibid.*

3. John Dingess manuscript, p. 270. Kunzog's version is somewhat different: "The show played a year in France, but business was not up to expectations. The American offerings were a surfeit in Europe, while blackface minstrelsy failed to appeal to French people. From Paris the circus moved to London where Bidwell fell ill. Rather than trust the venture to inexperienced hands, Bidwell and the American Champion Circus bid farewell to Europe and returned to New Orleans less than eighteen months after embarking on the quest for the pot of gold at the end of the European rainbow." Kunzog, op cit., p. 272.

4. *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, April 19, 1870, p. 1.

5. *Ibid.*, April 29, 1870, p. 2.

6. *Ibid.*, May 4, 1870, p. 1.

7. *Ibid.*, May 24, 1870, p. 10.

8. *New York Clipper*, March 25, 1871, p. 407. C. G Sturtevant stated in "Little Biographies of Famous American Circus Men," Number 9, *White Tops*. October, 1928, p. 8, that Dan Rice purchased the Paris Pavilion outfit in 1870.

9. *New York Clipper*, March 25, 1871, p. 273.

10. *St Louis Missouri Democrat*, April 4, 1871, p. 4.

11. *Ibid.*, April 19, 20, 21, 22, 1871, pp. 4.

12. Jackson (Michigan) *Daily Citizen*, June 5, 1871, p 4. By late July newspaper ads revealed that wire-walker Monsieur DeLave and the gymnast Antonio Brothers were on the bill. The Nelson family had disappeared.

13. Mobile *Daily Register*, January 25, 1872, p. 1.

14. Chicago *Tribune*, May 16, 1871, p. 5.

15. Chicago *Times*. May 16, 1871. p. 2.

16. Detroit *Free Press*, June 9, 1871, p. 1.

17. *Ibid.*, June 10, 1871. p. 1.

18. *Ibid.*, June 7, 1871. p 1.

19. Buffalo *Daily Courier*, July 6, 1871, p 2.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. Rochester *Evening Express*, July 18, 1871, p 2.

23. Utica *Daily Observer*, August 1, 1871, p. 3.

24. Albany *Argus*, August 22, 1871, p. 4.

25. *Ibid.*, August 23, 1871, p. 4.

26. *Ibid.*, August 24, 1871, p. 4. On the 24th the bareback equestrienne, Cordelia, made her first appearance with the show.

27. New York *Times*, September 6, 1871, p 5.

28. New York *Herald*, September 5, 1871, p 10.

29. New York *Times*. September 27, 1871, p 5.

30. New York *Clipper*, October 7, 1871, p 214.

31. Baltimore *American and Commercial Advertiser*, November 16, 1871, p. 4.

32. Baltimore *Morning Sun*, November 14, 1871, p. 2.

33. Albany *Argus*, August 21, 1871, p. 4.

34. St. Louis *Missouri Democrat*, April 9, 1871, p. 4.

35. Cincinnati *Enquirer*, August 28, 1874, p. 2. Rice's 1871 route (some dates are missing)—April: St Louis, Missouri, 17-29. May: Kankakee, Illinois, 12; Chicago, 15-27; Niles, Michigan 30; Kalamazoo, 31. June: Battle Creek, 1; Ann Arbor, 5; Detroit, 7-10; Toledo, Ohio, 14-15; Norwalk, 17; Akron, 22; Warren, 23; Youngstown, 24; Meadville, Pennsylvania, 26; Franklin, 27; Oil City, 28. July: Titusville, 1; Buffalo, New York, 6-8; Tonawanda, 10; Niagara Falls, 11; Lockport, 12; Rochester, 17-20; Canandaigua, 21; Clifton Springs, 22; Geneva, 24; Auburn, 25; Syracuse, 26-28; Oneida, 29; Utica, 31. August: Herkimer, 1; Little Falls, 2; Fort Plain, 3; Amsterdam, 4; Schenectady, 5; Troy, 7-9; Hoosick Falls, 10; Saratoga Springs, 11-12; Albany, 21-24. September: Brooklyn, 4-15; Newark, New Jersey, 17-18; New York City, 25-30, October 2-7. November: Baltimore, 13-25.

36. Buffalo *Daily Courier*, July 1. 1871, p. 2.

37. Utica *Daily Observer*, August 1, 1871, p. 3.

38. *Ibid.*, July 31. 1871, p. 3.

39. Albany *Argus*, August 21, 1871, p. 4.

40. Charleston *Daily*, December 25, 1871, p. 1.

41. *Ibid.*, December 28, 1871, p. 1.

42. Rochester *Evening Express*, August 28, 1874, p 1. The same account was carried in the Cincinnati *Enquirer*, August 28, 1874, p 2.



respectability seldom seen at a show of this nature attended the Paris Pavilion. And, lastly, the twelve act program offered by Rice was unique, pleasing, and beautifully presented. It was universally admired by the press and, if we can believe their accounts, well attended by a satisfied public.

Still, Rice's Grand Paris Pavilion Circus was a failure despite the apparent good business at the box office and its artistic success as expressed by the local newspapers. It is said that the proprietors lost some \$60,000 during the season. Quite simply, the Paris Pavilion was just too expensive to troupe. We know that it was used in places where the stands were for more than a single day, such as Detroit, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Troy, Albany, Brooklyn, and New York City.

It has been written that, closely packed, the outfit filled ten of the largest sized freight cars and that an extra heavy force of experienced working men was required to make the move.³⁴ We know that before the show opened in Baltimore several weeks were spent in improving the ground on Linden Avenue where the pavilion was to be erected.³⁵ We also know that it took a number of days to erect on site, perhaps a week at the very least. In Buffalo an item in the *Daily Courier*, four days in advance of the opening, read as follows: "Those who have passed up Main within a few days as far as the vacant lot on the corner of Virginia Street must have noticed the putting together of a curious looking structure and many have doubtless been anxious to know what it all meant. Now that the canopy is over it it will readily occur to everybody that it is Dan Rice's grand Paris Pavilion in which he is to give a series of entertainments commencing on the afternoon of the 5th."³⁶

How then could Rice tour this ponderous show as he did, making many one-day stands along the route? An auxiliary tent was carried for the one-day stands, while a large crew of workmen went ahead to prepare the ground and erect the Pavilion in the larger cities. The elaborate amphitheatre is not mentioned in either the advertising or the newspaper readers for these single day

dates. According to the Utica *Daily Observer*, many of the citizens who turned out for the circus were disappointed in not seeing the Paris Pavilion "with its reserved seats and

TUESDAY, JUNE 11th.

Afternoon and Evening.

DAN RICE'S



**PARIS PAVILION
CIRCUS!**

The most stupendous arena organization of modern times! The triumph of the season! The sensation of the century! The nation's Stars! In one grand combination under the largest Circus tent in America.

DAN RICE,

Who has spent thirty-six years in securing the leading ACROBATS, GYMNASTS, EQUESTRIANS and TRAPEZEE PERFORMERS—Male and Female—is now in his grand Western and Northern tour with a Company

Organized to Conquer!



In the language of the New Orleans Press, it is the

**MODEL CIRCUS
OF AMERICA.**

Whether viewed for its grandeur, magnificence, the magnitude and merit of its performances, the beauty and brilliancy of its vast amphitheatre, or the comfort of its patrons.

FIFTY ARTISTS in one Company, with twenty-two of the most beautiful ring horses on either continent.

Dan Rice's Celebrated Stud of Performing Horses,

Including the world-renowned BLIND EXCELSIOR Jr., Stephen A. Douglas, Julia, Rebecca and Attakapas.

For the list of artists, see FIFTY IN NUMBER, see programmes and small bills.

Even though the Paris Pavilion was gone after the 1871 season, Rice continued to use the name in his title. This newspaper ad is from 1872. Pfening Archives.

private boxes, and were almost discouraged from entering when they thought of the hard timber the common seats of a circus are made of."³⁷ The paper also revealed that Rice made no street parade. "His exhibition under the canvass requires no advertising of this character. It is worth the price of admission to see and hear Dan, the great American clown."³⁸ It is possible that the Apollonica used for the street bally was left on its railroad car for these towns.

Were there open dates that were costly to Rice? If so, why one-day stands were not always used while

the Pavilion was being erected in a major city is a mystery. But for whatever reason there were gaps in the itinerary. As previously stated, after the season's opening in St. Louis, there were two weeks within which only one date was reported before the Chicago stand. Another example was the respite between Saratoga Springs and Albany. The former was played on the 11th and 12th of August; the Albany appearance on the 21st. But as indicated by an item in the *Argus* of that date, "Dan Rice and company arrived from Saratoga last evening."³⁹ That would be on the 20th, a full week later.

After closing in Baltimore, the Dan Rice circus set out under the optional canvas outfit for an extensive tour of the South, still under the title of Rice's Paris Pavilion Circus, but stripped of its real identity. The canvas pavilion was pitched in Norfolk, Virginia, on Gray Street, almost in the center of the city, for performances on December 4, 5, and 6. Along with Rice, the advertising still listed Lizzie Marcellus, Lorenzo Mayo, the Nelson family, William H. Morgan, Fred O'Brien, William G. Miles, and Dick Clark, all members of the troupe when it left St. Louis a half-year since. The Baltimore arrivals, James Cooke and Prof Davis and his seven performing dogs, remained with the tour. New to the roster were Billy Burko, described as a pantomime clown and "funniest of felt-crowned fools," W. W. Nichols, somersault rider; and Frank Gardner, rider, leaper, and gymnast. Admission prices were fixed at \$1 for adults and 50¢ for children, double what was usual in the North. Except for Mentor's band, which gave a concert prior to the performances, there was no outside display. The interior was lighted by gas. The cold weather necessitated the use of furnaces within the canvas which, according to the Mobile *Daily Register*, made the place "as comfortable as any theatre." We assume that both the gas lighting fixtures and the heating units were the ones that had been used in Baltimore.

The show set up in Charleston, South Carolina, for a week beginning December 25, Rice's first visit to the city since 1850. The clown's generosity was heralded by the *Daily Courier*

brothers, hosts of the Delavan House. When the short concert ended Charley Leland invited the participants and the press to partake of refreshments. The jovial Rice was placed at the head of the table, from where he kept the party alive with anecdotal banter until long after midnight.

A stand in Brooklyn began on September 4. The New York *Times* read: "Mr. Rice's circus is fitted up in admirable style, and his company is very strong in talent and in numbers."²⁷ The *Herald* added: "The audience seemed composed of a different class than ordinarily found in a circus, the natural result of Dan Rice's 'new departure' from a traveling lumber yard to an opera house."²⁸ The engagement was successful the first week, but the second yielded only half houses, rain and apparent disinterest being the cause.

From Brooklyn, Rice went into New Jersey for a few dates, probably to allow the pavilion to be transferred to New York City. At Newark on September 20 and 21 the circus was performed in the Rink. During a showing on opening day the buffalo used in "Life Pictures on the Prairies" decided to step out of character and mingle with the audience. The animal was soon rounded up, its progress being inhibited by the slippery footing of the wooden floor, but not before giving the large assemblage a bit of a scare. From Newark the show moved on to Elizabeth.

The show opened in New York "until further notice," as the advertising phrased it, on September 25 at a 14th Street lot between Second and Third Avenues. There were only two matinees given each week, those being on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The *Times* writer was pleased with both the performance and the ambiance. It was suggested that the latter alone made it worth a visit but the "talent of the artists, and the variety of the programme they interpret[ed]," made the "brightness and comfort of the place a matter of secondary importance. The conclusion was: "The Paris Pavilion Circus is worthy, in all respects, of its reputation, and we are glad to see that this is increasing by the prestige of a very successful season in the city."²⁹ The representative from the New York

Clipper was also impressed, writing, "It is certainly the most comfortable establishment of the kind ever seen in this city."³⁰ The indefinite run ended, however, after two weeks.

Baltimore was the final stand for the luxurious wood and canvas pavilion. It was opened on the Garden Street lot near the Richmond market to a near full house. In the family circle every seat was taken with but few empty seats noticeable in the parquet and boxes, and spectators were standing around the rear of the amphitheatre. "The editorial box," the man from the *American and Commercial Advertiser* expressed, "with its handsome carpet, ample room and easy chairs, is a luxury that the fraternity is not often blessed with." Appreciation was expressed as well for Prof. Almon Menter's orchestra which always gave a free concert nightly before the performance.

Rice's pair of horses, Excelsior and Stephen A. Douglas, received special commendation. It was suggested that their ideal forms might be studied as models by the artist who wished to chisel a horse out of white marble. But most astonishing was their marvelous intelligence. "Col. Rice indulges in none of those fantastic motions by which ordinary trainers put their horses through their role of tricks, but he quietly takes his stand, addresses the horse in the language that he would use to one of his assistants, if he wanted him to do the same thing, and the horse seems to comprehend the meaning of his words, and to act accordingly."³¹

The *Morning Sun* was every bit as appreciative. It was observed that the pavilion was "tastefully arranged inside, and exceedingly comfortable, being warmed and admirably lighted." Chandeliers and argand burners, that threw a flood of illumination on the ring, heightened the effect of the spectacle.³²

The furnaces used for heating the pavilion were put to the test on the 17th. A cooling trend made it necessary to warm the place to an average

temperature of 65°, rendering the audience "as comfortable as though they were sitting in their own houses."

A family matinee was given on Saturday, November 18, and again on the following Wednesday. The admissions to all parts of the pavilion were reduced to 50¢ for adults and 25¢ for children. Additional attractions were brought in during this run. On the evening of the 18th, the English clown, James Cooke, first appeared. A few days later Prof Davis was featured with his educated canines, which were trained to read from a book, perform acrobatic feats, walk a slack-rope, dance, form pyramids, etc. The run was extended to Thanksgiving Day, November 30. At that time three performances were given, the one at 10:00 a.m. to accommodate the 18 teachers and pupils of the public schools for which prices were lowered to 25¢ in all parts of the house.

November 30 marked the end for the unique structure that had been developed for use at the Paris Exposition of 1867. The Pavilion, along with its cushy seats and opulent features, was placed in storage at James M. Eppley and Messrs. Morgan & Sons on North Howard Street.

The commentary from local papers had been consistent throughout the tour. As one newspaper man put it, "Gas, sofas, easy chairs, carpeted floors, and a good performance, all aid in making the visitor well pleased." The appearance and comfort within the pavilion was found to be far superior to anything seen at a circus before, with all seats numbered and sold by "coupon tickets," except for the family circle. An item in the Albany *Argus* bluntly affirmed that "pine boards as a substitute for chairs have had their natural effect, until the circus in this country has become anything but a favorable resort."³³ But equipped with cane-bottomed seats and settees and with parquet and boxes to separate them from the rowdy *hoi poloi*, people of



tors had menageries.

A four-day stand in Buffalo, July 5-8, on the corner of Main and Virginia Streets was one of the first New York dates for Rice. "Nothing to offend the most fastidious will be permitted." For those who wanted to avoid the rush at the box office, tickets were available at the music store of Messrs. Cottier & Denton.

Rice felt competition from Howes' Great London, exhibiting in the United States for the first time and equipped with the finest street procession of any show, which followed on the 13th and 14th, but was being advertised as early as the 6th, "Wait for Howes' Great London Menagerie and Circus, Both Exhibited Under One Enormous Field Marquee."¹⁹ As if that were not enough, Rice's opening competed with a lingering Fourth of July celebration in downtown Buffalo, but still nearly filled the amphitheatre. "A large portion of these were composed of a class of our citizens whom it is safe to say witnessed a circus exhibition for the first time in their lives."²⁰ In making an observation about the editorial box, a local writer commented, "That any facility should be afforded to scribbling bohemians will be a surprise even to our permanent theatres." And, as to the entertainment, it was considered "so far superior to anything of the kind ever before seen in Buffalo."²¹

On Friday, the 7th, Rice offered a special 10:00 a.m. show. The gross receipts were given to aid the local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, a gesture that today might be looked upon as a monumental irony. As a novelty for the children at this performance, Rice introduced into the ring a number of Shetland ponies, the smallest of which was said to weigh thirty pounds.

The Pavilion was erected on Falls Field in Rochester for performances on July 17 through 20. Advance tickets were available at Dewey's Reynolds' Arcade. The *Evening Express* reported the pavilion "well filled" for the opening day afternoon and evening performances. "In fact,"

it read, "we have never seen a more respectable or better behaved audience at any entertainment of the kind that has ever been given in our city." The performance was also stated as being "superior." "The equestrian feats, somersaults, gymnastic efforts, etc., etc., all possess a freshness and excellence that is worthy of the highest degree of praise."²²

On the 18th a strong wind was blowing during the trapeze act of Auguste Siegrist. When he sprang from his pedestal to the catcher he failed to clasp the outstretched hands and fell some forty feet, missing the safety net and striking with his shoulder on the ground. After being assisted to a dressing room, it was ascertained that the injury was not serious. But for the rest of the Rochester engagement at least, the Nelson child, not yet eight years of age, replaced Auguste in the "Leap for Life," a performance perhaps not as deftly rendered but somewhat more thrilling because of the precocity of the callow artist.

Rice played Syracuse for the dates of July 26, 27, and 28. On the evening of Thursday the 17th the company celebrated the wedding of popular acrobat, C. W. Antonio, to Miss Lottie Harris of Fox's American Theatre, Philadelphia. The post-ceremonial activities, which took place at the Fayette House, included dinner, the presentation of gifts, and a number of speeches, songs, and toasts. A few days later a vague newspaper comment read: "Dan has no female trapeze performers. One of the girls was discovered to be a boy recently, and the other one left and went into Canada."²³ So much for Lila and Zoe.

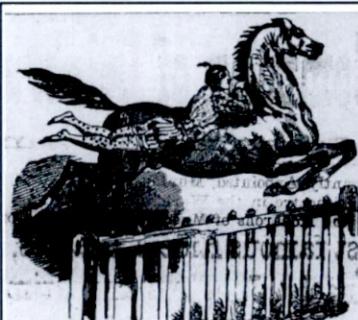
The August 21 opening in Albany was welcomed by a downpour of rain. What would normally have been unpleasantly damp within the amphitheatre did not occur in this instance. In the first place, the structure had been erected prior to the storm. And, of course, with wooden flooring and sides and everything else being carefully sealed, the interior

or comfort was designed to remain unchanged in any kind of foul weather. The *Argus* reported the accommodations to be the most complete ever presented by any traveling company. "There is no doubt," it stated, "that this pavilion will attract a better class of people than usually attends a circus performance."²⁴

The four-day stand was, however, encumbered by opposition from P. T. Barnum's immense organization, which day-and-dated on the 22nd and 23rd. Like Rice's, the Barnum outfit had met with rain in Troy on the 21st, prior to its Albany arrival. This was Barnum's first year as a circus proprietor and one, thanks to his partners, W. C. Coup and Dan Castello, that proved a great success. The museum was a tremendous feature, the menagerie was well stocked, and the street procession was impressive. During the season the crowds that flocked to the show necessitated an enlargement of the canvas amphitheatre and an addition of a third daily performance at most places. In Albany two shows were given on the first day and three on the second.

The competition between the two great circuses proved to be a draw, with both doing good business. In addition to creature comforts, Rice had the advantage of location, set up as he was in the heart of the city, while the site for the Barnum people was near the outskirts. This compensated for the disparity in size and flash between the two. Referring to the performance at the Paris Pavilion of the 22nd, the *Argus* man wrote, "The vast amphitheatre was filled from parquet to the most extreme standing aisles of the family circle." And of the Barnum show, "nearly eight thousand people, from every walk in life, attended the afternoon performance, and in the evening the rush was almost overwhelming."²⁵ It was summarized in the *Argus* of the 24th with, "Ordinarily two arenic exhibitions in Albany at the same time would have proved fatal to both. In this case neither Dan Rice nor Barnum were bankrupt, and both will leave with exchequers in a healthy condition."²⁶

It might be added here that following the closing performance, Rice's circus band serenaded the Leland



upon, or the section of the country referred to, is out of place. No one knows better than Col. Rice himself, a shrewd and veteran circus manager, that the people understand how to take such allusions, and have very little or no belief in the political faith of 'show people.'¹³ But Col. Dan was still the greatest star the American circus had produced to this point in history; so, needless to mention, throughout the tour Rice and the elegant pavilion were the main attractions. Quite ironically, however, it was this very year that an even greater name was being connected with circuses, one that would far outlast Rice's fame--P. T. Barnum.

The record of the Rice itinerary for 1871 is incomplete. We know he was billed to open a two-week Chicago stand on Monday night, May 15; but we don't know his whereabouts between that date and the St. Louis closing, with the exception of Kankakee, Illinois, on May 12. There are similar lapses of information on his wanderings throughout the season.

The Chicago *Times* reported that Alderman McCaffrey had offered a resolution during recent common council proceedings that Rice should be prohibited from showing within the city limits until he complied with an ordinance that required him to take out a license. Apparently he paid the fee, because the performance went on as scheduled.

The pavilion, which the *Tribune* assessed as "a perfect marvel, being fully equal to a first-class theatre in all respects," was erected in Lake Park on Michigan Avenue between Randolph and Washington Streets. The leapers, led by Fred O'Brien were particularly noteworthy, the writer felt. He was also impressed with the trained horses, Douglas and Excelsior; Prof. Nelson and his two children "who altogether surpassed anything of the kind which has been presented in Chicago;" the extraordinary tumbling of Gonzales; and the hurdle riding of William Morgan. We might add, he was also appreciative of the elegantly fitted private box—the one that had been arranged for the French Emperor in 1867—at the disposal of members of the Chicago press.¹⁴ The *Chicago Times* reported the entertainment "to be upon a scale

of excellence fully commensurate with the beauty of the structure in which it was given."¹⁵ On the 17th the trapezists, Lila and Zoe, were introduced to Chicago audiences. On the morning of Friday, the 26th at 10:00 a.m., a complimentary benefit was given in aid of the Chicago Orphan Asylum. The run ended the following day.

The company went from Chicago into Michigan. There were a series of one-day stands before setting up in Detroit on the corner of Michigan Avenue and Fourth Street for four days. This city hosted more than its share of visiting circuses in the months of May and June. Before Rice, James Robinson's Champion Circus had appeared on May 12 and 13, followed closely by Van Amburgh's Golden Menagerie on May 26 and 27. Then, when Rice left town, L. B. Lent's New York Circus moved in for June 12 and 13.

The Detroit *Free Press* revealed that Rice's first day's program on June 8 opened with the grand entry of "The Court of Isabella, ex-Queen of Spain, in an Equestrian School." This was followed by the *hatoute* leaping of Frederick O'Brien; Dan Rice and his educated horse; Stephen A. Douglas; Prof. Nelson and his two boys; the aerial stunts of Lila and Zoe; William H. Morgan's bareback riding; and finished with the comic antics of the mules, Pete and Barney. If the paper's list is complete, one can

see there were only six acts following the grand entry, far fewer than within the usual circus program. Where was Wooda Cook, Lizzie Marcellus, Fred Barclay, and others? Were they saved for later in the run? We know Rice changed the program on particular days, with new acts appearing as an encouragement for repeat patronage. For example, on the 10th a spectacle called "Sports and Pastimes of the Celestials" was introduced, consisting of a number of acrobats and gymnasts forming living pyramids and other feats in keeping with an

Oriental theme.

The newspaper repeated the praises of the earlier stands and the usual assessment of good houses. "An immense business was done yesterday [June 8], and all in attendance were unanimously of the opinion that no better arena exhibition was ever given in Detroit."¹⁶ Particularly impressive was the sack and blindfold act of Zoe, of which "no more desperate and startling feat has ever been undertaken," and the tight-rope performances of Mons. DeLave (a new acquisition since St. Louis) and Auguste Siegrist.¹⁷ On the 10th, the last day in Detroit, the children, matrons, and officers of the Protestant Orphan Asylum were invited to the matinee.

According to the Jackson, Michigan *Daily Citizen*, in referring to a June 3 stand in that city, there was a side show attached to the circus which exhibited the "Life of Christ." This had to be a scavenger outfit, independent of Rice's troupe, taking advantage of the crowds on circus day. There was certainly nothing of the like allowed on the lot. As one newspaper affirmed. "No humbug sideshows are permitted on the grounds, and the audience will be nourished with a plentiful supply of ice water."¹⁸

There were surprisingly few multi-day dates. I have found none during its tour of Ohio, but when the company entered New York state in early

July there were three and four-day stands in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Troy, and Albany. Here they had to share the territory with L. B. Lent's New York Circus, Sluthour & Son's Great Continental, the Great Commonwealth, Howes' Great London,

the Great Eastern, and P. T. Barnum's Great Traveling Menagerie, Caravan and Hippodrome. There were many occasions when a circus had just preceded them or was advertising in advance to follow them in. And half of their competi-



check on the finances of the show.⁹

The opulent arena was transported to St. Louis and there erected at Sixth and Washington Avenues, on the property where the old Lindell Hotel had stood. It was announced in the *Missouri Democrat* on April 4, two weeks before opening, that the pavilion was "fast approaching completion."¹⁰ This brings us to an issue basic to our investigation. Given the complexity and unwieldy nature of the full pavilion, what was the extent of time, labor, and expense needed to tear down and set up? More on this later.

The Dan Rice's Paris Pavilion Circus opened for business in St. Louis on April 17, 1871, exactly one year from the day the structure had made its debut in New Orleans. But there was a "fly in the ointment." Just a few blocks away, pitched on the Lindell lot at the corner of Washington and Eleventh Avenues, was Robinson's Combination Menagerie, Aviary and Circus. It, too, opened on the 17th and, according to the *Missouri Democrat* of the following day, opened to standing room. And, in spite of the competition from Rice, it continued to do well throughout the one-week engagement. The advantage was, of course, the additional bird and animal exhibits—not to mention the featured riding, leaping, and tumbling by the "Apollo Belvidere of the Arena," Robert Stickney, Sr.

Credit the congenial people of St. Louis; the Paris Pavilion Circus was playing to good business as well. They came to enjoy the comfort of the interior accommodations and the outstanding ring performance. Rice carried no menagerie or sideshow, no lemonade and peanut peddlers, and no street procession other than the Apollonicon bandwagon.

The program consisted of such spectacle pieces as "The Court of Isabella, Ex-Queen of Spain, in an Equestrian Social," along with the

usual equestrian, acrobatic, and gymnastic feats. Prof. Nelson tossed his two children about like Indian-rubber. "They pirouette while standing on the soles of their father's feet, and wear a smile of confidence, and perform with the grace and activity of a Bonfanti. They give acrobatic acts that would be credited to matured and skillful gymnasts." The great *batoute* leaper, Fred O'Brien, easily cleared four horses upon which tour men stood. "The performance produced a chilling effect, and the applause was immense." There was

William Morgan's daring hurdle riding. The bareback, pirouette, and somersault riding of Fred Barclay was justly admired. "He is, moreover, an actor of no mean ability, as was manifested by his impersonation of a Comanche warrior." This

portrayal was part of an enactment of the sports and pastimes of the Comanche tribe, including a buffalo hunt, called "Life Pictures on the Prairies." Add to this Rice's milk white Arabian charger, Stephen A. Douglas, and his eighteen year old blind talking horse, Excelsior, Jr., "who seemed to understand every word addressed to him and "instantly obeyed every command."¹¹

It was Rice's practice with the multi-day stands to introduce new acts during the run. Miss Lizzie Marcellus, "juvenile queen of the manege," was brought forth as the bareback equestrienne. She had been apprenticed to Rice since about 1866. The Victorelli Brothers worked an act entitled "The School of Physical Education." The Cylocephalus, or monkey man, made an appearance. And the heralded bareback rider, Master Wooda Cook, made his debut on the 26th He was a back and forward somersault rider, billed as turning twenty-four consecutive somersaults on a swiftly running horse.

There was also the "two-woman"

trapeze act, Lila and Zoe. Zoe, blindfolded and encased in a sack, swung from a trapeze, turned a somersault in mid-air, and ended by clutching a single rope, a version of *l'echelle perilleuse*. It has been said that their leap and catch performance may have represented the first appearance of a female catcher.

Others in the company included youthful rider Master Dick Clark; the French equestrienne, Mme. Richmonde; the Chilian gymnast Adolph Gonzales; the Siegrist family and Antonio Brothers; Mike Austin on the horizontal bars; and John Callan, strong man.

The show had four clowns in addition to Rice. Lorenzo Mayo was a French and Spanish clown, said to have escaped the siege of Paris in a balloon. Auguste Siegrist doubled as a German dialect clown. Edward Hailey was described as an American colloquial clown. William G. Miles, the "Equestrian Joe Jefferson," performed as a comic actor and acrobat. Mayo and Siegrist were the only ones of the group of any note. Indeed, during the tour one journalist remarked: "Dan Rice's clowns, in their efforts to be funny, remind one of the attempts of a very small, juvenile duck to swallow an exceedingly large frog—ignominious failures."¹² Perhaps more laugh provoking were Rice's trick mules, Pete and Barney. O'Brien, Callan, Clark, Miles, and Bailey had been with Rice the previous year, successfully touring the river towns on the steamboat *Will S. Hays*.

And, of course, there was Rice himself. Throughout the tour he was well behaved, there being no indication of impropriety or of missed performances. His ring appearances included familiar discourses of fun and philosophy. His drawing power was still apparent, the question regarding his loyalty to the Union during the Civil War having, either through forgiveness or forgetfulness by the public, no negative after effect. The single, disapproving commentary came from the Mobile *Daily Register*, which noted displeasure with his political dialogues. He is "too much in the habit of talking politics or making political hits in the ring," the scribe observed, "a thing, by the way, no matter who the person the joke is



PARIS PAVILION CIRCUS.

Paris Pavilion Circus Company.

DAN RICE,

JOHN H. TREWOLLA,
FREDERICK RIVERS,

Sole Manager and Proprietor.

Equestrian Director.
Maître du Cirque.

LORENZO MAYA.

Col. Rice considers himself specially fortunate in being able to announce the engagement of this great French Grimaldi, the KING CLOWN of Paris; from which beleaguered city he escaped in a balloon, to drop down upon us in a character purely the conception of his mirth-teeming brain, and never displayed in the American Arena.

MR. FRED. BARCLAY.

The new Zenith Star Equestrian: a magnificent young artist, who comes enthusiastically indorsed by the South as the greatest of the great Bare-back, Pirouette and Somersault performers.

MISS LIZZIE MARCELLA.

The brilliant, beautiful and venturesome Young Premiere Equestrienne; first in the list of native Lady Riders, and the recognized juvenile Queen of the Menage.

MR. WM. H. MORGAN.

Whose original sensation bare-back hurdle act is almost appalling in its apparent disregard of the most formidable obstacles, and terrific and reckless risk of life and limb.

MR. FREDERICK O'BRIEN.

The extraordinary young Irishman, entitled by his countrymen "Erin's Arenic Sun-Burst," and who, having sought in vain to encounter a successful rival, has honorably earned the distinction of **Champion Battente Lepre.**

SIGNOR ADOLPH GONZALES.

The Wonderful Chilian, whose lofty and unerring double somersaults and lightnings and entirely original gymnastic evolutions, utterly eclipse the most admired efforts of all preceding or cotemporaneous tumblers, and create the almost irresistible impression of even more than maniac inspired muscle and activity.

THE GREAT NELSONS.

Professor Nelson and his lovely and extraordinary children in their beautiful Salon Entertainment.

THE RENOWNED VICTORELLI'S.

Henry, John and Hector.

This Marvelous Triad of Gymnasts, famous on both continents for diverse and singular feats of agility, delicate calculation and dextrous strength, appear in a Grand Triple Partie, in which Mr. J. Victorelli will perform the difficult feat of a KNEE SOMERSAULT, being the only person living that ever accomplished it.

SIGNOR ELEONOR.

Ariel of the Arena,—whose marvelous ethereal feats have never been attempted by mortal man before him. Hanging head downward and suspended as it were 'twixt heaven and earth, this "Man Fly" swings by the feet alone, alternately letting go with one and catching by the other, with reckless rapidity and at the apparent risk of instant death. As a sensational performer, whose every movement thrills the spectators, he has no equal.

THE MAN MONKEY CARLOS.

An immense and in fact human-sized specimen of his race. Positively FIVE FEET in height, whose natural imitative powers have been developed by Mr. Wm. Miles, until he has—marvelous to relate, become an accomplished adept in all exceptionally difficult and daring equestrian feats. As seen on horseback he combines the Astonishing and the Ludicrous to an extent which makes him the most unique arenic feature ever presented to the public.

THE CELEBRATED SEIGRIST FAMILY.

AUGUST SEIGRIST, Jr., the subtle Tight Rope Performer. MADAM SEIGRIST, Character Equestrian. MM'LE ADELINA SEIGRIST, Danseuse au Cheval.

MADAME RICHMONDE.

Belle Equestrienne Francaise.

JOHN CALLAN.

The Modern Antaeus—a Giant in Strength—an Apollo in Grace—whose supple feats have secured for him the suggestive appellation of "The Leopard Athlete."

MASTER DICK CLARK.

The Youthful Equestrian Marvel.

WM. G. MILES.

The Equestrian Joe Jefferson of the Ring, and irresistibly ludicrous comic actor and acrobat.

MIKE AUSTIN.

The Mercury of the Horizontal Bar.

EDWARD HAILLEY.

Colloquial Clown and Funniest of Felt-Crowned Fools.

Added to the above unprecedented array of diversified talent is a large auxiliary force of Tumblers and General Performers.

THE BRUTE ACTORS.

THE \$100,000 BLIND MARVEL, "EXCELSIOR, JR."

Only now will get of speech.
With hand he'll tell the world his tale,
Or step the human way by his side.
At first he'll speak
As the three magicians can perform
From the depths of the earth.
Then with a shout
With words stronger than the shout
He'll speak with a voice like a lion.
And then he'll speak
In language that the world has not heard.

The Time School keeps, And in the same,
Keeps a schoolroom, And in the room,
Gymnastic, A picture, make
Show that he went to the circus late,
And made best
Prize of the show, May seal the blind
In the schoolroom, And in the room,
He'll speak with a voice like a lion.
And in language that the world has not heard
When he goes to the circus late,
And in the room.

The Magnificent and Fiery Arabian Trick-Change STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS, the only Thoroughbred Arabian Horse ever found in America, and famous alike for his extraordinary beauty and intelligence; introduced and performed by Dan Rice. The Beautiful Lexington Filly, "REBECCA," performed by Miss Lizzie Marcella. The Spanish Fred, Andalusian School-Mare, "JULIA." The Original Naturalized Cow-Mares, PETE AND BARNEY.

THE GRAND ORCHESTRA.

Over which Prof. EDGAR A. MENTER has his fingers stretched farther before him, "the Wizard Bugler of the West," one of the most talented of American Leaders, within the limits, is a marvellous and delightful feature in the PARIS PAVILION CIRCUS; composed of entirely first-class Musicians, chosen with special reference to individual superiority. The music is admirably selected from a wide range of the most brilliant and popular pieces, and rendered with such high artistic finishment as to place constitutes a brilliant Entertainment.

offered candy, fruits, popcorn, peanuts, cookies and lemonade.²

An exemplary group of performers was assembled under the title of American Championship Circus. It included James Robinson, champion bareback rider, and his son, Clarence; equestrian Frank Pastor, brother of the famous Tony Pastor; Robert Stickney, of the respected Stickney family; champion leaper, George M. Kelly; French and Spanish clown, Lorenzo Mayo; rider and tumbler, Charles Rivers; and many other attractions. The equestrian manager was Edwin Derious; and the manager was David Bidwell.

It might be noted that the display of any flag other than the French colors was prohibited at this time. According to John A. Dingess, Pastor, who used three large flags in his act, was the first to unfold the stars and stripes at a French circus. This bravado was witnessed by Napoleon and the Empress. It was also here that Edwin Derious was gored by a buffalo, stricken with paralysis, and disabled for ten years prior to his death.

After arriving in Paris, and when nearly all the preparations for their opening had been completed, vehement opposition by local managers influenced the evocation of a local law that prevented the erection of any wooden building within the city limits. Consequently, the circus proprietors could not assemble their pavilion, but instead arranged to perform at the *Theatre Prince Imperiale*, on the *Rue Du Temps*. The show remained there for six months before removing to the Holborn Amphitheatre, London, for another three. The unused pavilion and its equipment was returned to the United States and stored in New Orleans.³

It is quite probable that the Flatfoot shares of this unused amphitheatre were purchased by Spalding and Bidwell, for in 1870 the pavilion was resurrected in New Orleans on the corner of Canal and Villere Streets to house entertainments for the summer season. One can speculate that a motive for removing this white elephant from storage and displaying it at this time and place was for a possible sale.

The Paris Circus Pavilion was

opened on Easter Sunday, April 17, with C. W. Noyes' Crescent City Circus. The *Daily Picayune* suggested that the entertainment at this new place of amusement was well attended on opening night. "The like of such a place has long been wished for in New Orleans, and our play going public cannot but appreciate the efforts of the management to please them. The performance, too, is excellent. Mr. Noyes has supplied his Crescent City Circus with every possible attraction."⁴

Dan Rice. Circus
World Museum collection.

The roster included the Wilson Brothers, gymnasts; and riders Fred Barclay, Mrs Noyes, and star performer Wooda Cook. Sharing the billing was aerialist Millie Turnour. Miss Turnour's daring act was detailed at this time in the *Daily Picayune*: "A swinging bar is suspended about 50 feet in the air. Upon this simple bar she balances, swings, suspends and enacts feats which are equally the amazement, the admiration and the fear of all who behold her. Her turns in the air are marvellous to behold, and as she descends to the stage, head downwards on a single rope without the assistance of her hands, the tumultuous applause which invariably greets her, is an involuntary tribute to so much courage united with so much grace."⁵

Performances were given nightly, with 1:00 p.m. matinees on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Private boxes with six chairs, \$5.00; private boxes with three chairs, \$3.00; boxes with a single chair, \$1.00; dress circle chair, 75¢; family circle chair, 50¢; dress circle chair (colored), \$1.00; family circle chair (colored), 50¢. Matinees were slightly less.

For the closing week of May 2 there was a change in the program. The spectacle *Sprites of the Silver Shower* was offered, as was the grand tournament, *Field of the Cloth of Gold*. On Tuesday, Mrs. Noyes took a

benefit. The *Daily Picayune* reported that "she showed to great advantage the perfect power and mastery she has over her spirited Arab horse, D'Talma, and executed some feats which drew forth repeated and deserved applause."⁶ Wooda Cook took a benefit on Thursday and Charles Noyes on the closing Saturday, May 7.

With the circus gone, the pavilion stood vacant until Monday, May 16.

On the evening of this date the Berger Family of bell ringers, who had been performing at the Academy of Music, took a benefit "tendered by the citizens of New Orleans." On the 24th, the first of a series of ads appeared in the *Daily Picayune*, offering to rent the Paris Circus Pavilion "by the day or night, for balls, picnics, and any first-class entertainment."⁷ The ads continued until mid-July, then disappeared. One can speculate that the Spalding and Bidwell pavilion was dismantled around this time.

It was announced in the *Clipper* in the spring of 1871 that the Paris Pavilion had been acquired by Dan Rice, who had arrived in New Orleans on January 7, 1871, on his own boat after a lengthy and prosperous tour.⁸ Spalding and Bidwell had found themselves a buyer.

The price Rice paid is not known. According to Kunzog, it varied from \$200,000 to twice that sum (an estimate that appears to be much too high). In addition to the building, the deal included a plant used to manufacture gas for illumination, the Apollonicon bandwagon, hundreds of costumes, carriages and wagons, saddles and other appurtenances, but no animals. Since Rice did not pay for all of this in full, but gave notes for the balance, Spalding insisted that his son, Harry W. Spalding, be hired as manager as a way of keeping

Next page. Program for the 1871 Rice Paris Pavilion. Pfening Archives.



THE RECYCLING OF THE DAN RICE PARIS PAVILION CIRCUS

By William L. Slout

This paper was presented at the 1998 Circus Historical Society convention in Atlanta, Georgia.

Dan Rice's Paris Pavilion Circus opened at the Richmond Market lot in Baltimore on November 13, 1871. The show was certainly the most extravagant of its kind to ever visit the city. The initial plan was, after a successful winter season, to take the outfit to Europe for the year of 1872. A large frame building was erected, the interior of which was decorated with flowers, fountains, and thousands of gas jets. The dress circle, parquet, and boxes were adorned with expensive imported velvet carpets and furnished with elegant cane-bottomed chairs and comfortable settees. The entire amphitheatre appeared to be much too costly for a prudent investment. But wait. It was not originally assembled and constructed for the Baltimore winter season.

Five years earlier a scheme had been devised to send a circus company to the Paris Exposition of 1867. The investors were the "Flatfoots"—Avery Smith, Gerard C. Quick, and John J. Nathans—joined by Dr. Gilbert R. Spalding and David Bidwell. The partnership chartered the large steamer, *Guiding Star*, to convey the company, horses, ponies, mules, a performing buffalo, wardrobe, trappings, and the portable amphitheatre, which was to be put together in sections on an open space near the exposition grounds in Paris. W. T. B. Van Orden was sent in advance to prepare the way.

Dr. Gilbert R. Spalding, one of the original investors in the Paris Exposition.

The amphitheatre, wooden with a canvas top, was made by a Mr. Kennedy of Albany, New York. It was

118 feet in diameter, with forty outside panels, each eight feet wide and sixteen feet high. They were fitted together by hinges between sturdy posts one foot in width which interlocked with the flooring, making the pavilion as substantial as an ordinary frame structure. Masts around the outside were arranged to bear the colors of each nation and the private boxes within were designed to be ornamented with damask draperies in like manner.

The interior housed a forty-two foot ring and seating to accommodate somewhere around 2,000 spectators, not counting the standing room. A splendidly furnished box over the main entrance was reserved expressly for the French Emperor and his royal family; another was arranged for the orchestra on the opposite side of the ring, over the passageway to the dressing area. The parquet, which was nearest the ring, was furnished with cane-bottomed settees. John C. Kunzog, in his biography of Rice, has this area seating 540 people; the *Clipper* gives a figure of 760. Directly behind this were forty-four private boxes, excluding the imperial loge, divided by a walnut railing and

each fitted with six cane-bottomed easy chairs. The balcony or family circle seated over 1,000 on three-person, carpet-covered, folding benches. The ring, encompassed by a two foot high wall, and the aisle to the dressing rooms were the only spaces without wooden flooring.

A more detailed description has been given in Kunzog's biography. There was red carpeting on the floor, lace curtains covering the wall openings, and heavy draperies serving as an acoustical aid. Brass fixtures on the lobby wall held velvet covered ropes that served as hand rails. Tri-color velvet curtains hung over the entrance to the dressing rooms. Above the ring, extending from center pole to sidewalls, were velvet-covered ropes from which hung the flags of all nations. Around the lobby in front were fountains depicting birds and children in pools of water. Baskets of flowers hung on the walls. About the building, some one thousand open flame jets flickered from elegant chandeliers. A Drummond light hanging from the center pole gave out bright illumination during the performance.¹

There were "withdrawing rooms" for both men and women situated above the performer's entry at the end of the lobby. These were furnished with wash bowls fitted with running water and supplied with soap and towel racks. Near each rack hung a device that gave off a spray of perfumed powder each time a towel was used. The toilets were curtained off for privacy. They resembled a large funnel with a wooden seat. The overflow water from the fountains was piped to them, creating a continuous stream which was flushed into the municipal sewer, preventing the escape of disagreeable gas and odor. In the entrance lobby were three ticket windows for the expeditious handling of patrons, while directly opposite was the refectory stall that



magic show with her stepfather and her uncle, Harry Blackstone. Her marriage to Homer Hobson, Jr. having dissolved, she eventually married Tommy Thompson, a talent scout for 20th Century Fox. In later years as her husband's health failed, they experienced hard times. Homer, Jr. never stopped loving her and in various communications with Tommy he would often refer to her as "our wife." Surviving her husband, she passed away at the age of 82 on May 21, 1993 at Memphis, Tennessee.⁴⁴

In 1951 Homer, Jr. and Herbie Hobson operated a cocktail lounge in Chicago which was a gathering place for Polack Bros. show folks during their Chicago engagements. According to official social security records, both brothers died in California in the early to mid 1980s.

At the age of 80, Estella Hobson passed away of a stroke on May 13, 1955 at her home in Pacific Palisades, California. After having retired in 1931, she had worked briefly as an "actress" in the "Wings of the Century" pageant at Chicago's Century of Progress in 1933. Among others, her survivors included three grandchildren.⁴⁵

Homer D. Hobson, Sr. died in Chicago on February 24, 1959 shortly before he was to be released from the hospital following treatment for a stroke.⁴⁶

The Famous Hobsons will be fondly remembered by their staunch fans and friends. The professional style and artistry of the family's established enduring standards of excellence for bareback riding.

Notes

- Billboard*, December 13, 1919, p. 57.
- New York Clipper*, March 17, 1883, p. 846.
- Ibid.* February 21, 1883, p. 785.
- Billboard*, May 2, 1959, p. 64, 61.
- New York Clipper*, December 13, 1890, p. 629.
- Billboard*, May 2, 1959, p. 54, 61; *Banner Line*, June 1, 1955, p. 2.
- Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Circus route book, herald, 1896; Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Circus newspaper ad for September 3 to 12, 1896 date in San Francisco; *Banner Line*, May 1, 1978, p. 2.
- Billboard*, April 10, 1926, p. 62; May 8, 1926, p. 5, 58; June 19, 1926, p. 60; July 17, 1926, p. 54; August 7, 1926,



Homer Hobson, Sr., ringmaster of the Tom Mix Circus in 1935.

p. 62, 67; May 7, 1927, p. 58, 62, 67; June 25, 1927, p. 70; Walter L. Main Circus program, 1927; *White Tops*, October, 1927, p. 4.

9. *Billboard*, January 25, 1902, p. 7.

10. Ringling Bros. payroll book, 1902; Ringling Bros. route book, herald, newspaper ad, 1902; *Billboard*, April 19, 1902, p. 5.

11. *Billboard*, February 15, 1902, p. 11.

12. Ringling Bros. payroll book, 1903; Ringling Bros. route book, program, herald, 1903; Ringling Bros. newspaper ad, September 7 to 14, 1903 date for San Francisco.

13. *New York Clipper*, July 16, 1904, p. 473; Ringling Bros. program, herald, 1904.

14. Ringling Bros. programs, 1905-1909.

15. Edward Shipp's Winter Circus herald, 1906.

16. *Billboard*, April 14, 1906, p. 35; Ringling Bros. payroll book, 1906.

17. *Billboard*, April 20, 1901, p. 30; April 3, 1909, p. 17; *New York Clipper*, April 3, 1909, p. 195; April 10, 1909, p. 221.

18. *Billboard*, March 18, 1911, p. 46; April 15, 1911, p. 67; December 16, 1911, p. 21, 52, 110; April 12, 1913, p. 22; July 12, 1913, p. 30; *New York Clipper*, March 16, 1912, p. 10; Sells-Floto Circus route book, newspaper ad, program, 1912; program, 1913.

19. *New York Clipper*, May 10, 1913, p. 7.

20. Sells-Floto Circus program, herald, 1917, *Billboard*, May 5, 1917, p. 69.

21. *Billboard*, April 13, 1918, p. 60; June 15, 1918, p. 27; June 29, 1918, p.

27.

22. *Ibid.* May 10, 1919, p. 90; Sells-Floto Circus program, 1919.

23. *Billboard*, April 10, 1920, p. 88; October 16, 1920, p. 90; Sells-Floto Circus program, 1920.

24. *Billboard*, January 22, 1921, p. 63.

25. *Ibid.* November 11, 1922, p. 72; November 25, 1922, p. 80; Sells-Floto Circus route book, 1922.

26. *Billboard*, April 15, 1922, p. 9.

27. *Ibid.* May 12, 1923, p. 88.

28. *Ibid.* April 12, 1924, p. 115; Sells-Floto Circus program, 1924.

29. *Billboard*, January 17, 1925, p. 74, 76.

30. *Ibid.* April 18, 1925, p. 5, 112; September 5, p. 61; September 12, 1925, p. 60; Sells-Floto Circus program, 1925; newspaper ad, July 22, 1925 date at Monroe, Wisconsin; *White Tops*, January-February 1992, p. 16; March-April 1992, p. 10; May-June 1992, p. 50.

31. *Billboard*, April 10, 1926, p. 62; May 1, 1926, p. 60; May 8, 1926, p. 58; June 19, 1926, p. 60; July 3, 1926, p. 60; July 17, 1926, p. 54; May 7, 1927, p. 58, 62, 67; June 25, 1927, p. 70; *White Tops*, October 1927, p. 4; Walter L. Main Circus program, 1927.

32. *Shrine Magazine*, July, 1927, "Ever Changing Never Changing Circus" by Earl Chapin May.

33. *Popular Mechanics*, December, 1927, "It's a Simple Life for Children of Circus" by Earl Chapin May.

34. *White Tops*, March-April 1992, p. 11.

35. *Billboard*, February 15, 1930, p. 95.

36. *Ibid.* April 12, 1930, p. 60, 79; May 12, 1930, p. 89; June 7, 1930, p. 53.

37. *White Tops*, May, 1931, p. 4; *Billboard*, August 30, 1930, p. 56, 59.

38. St. Louis Police Circus, program, 1931; Sells-Floto Circus, program, 1931; *Billboard*, February 14, 1931, p. 69; August 30, 1930, p. 56, 59.

39. *White Tops*, July-August, 1933, p. 24.

40. *Billboard*, April 28, 1934, p. 36, 40; September 1, 1934, p. 41; September 8, 1934, p. 35; November 24, 1934, p. 36; December 8, 1934, p. 36; December 29, 1934, p. 232.

41. *Bandwagon*, May-June, 1971, p. 4; Tom Mix Circus route book, program, newspaper ad, 1936.

42. Cole Bros. Circus program, route book, 1937.

43. Cole Bros. Circus program 1938 (Chicago Stadium); Robbins Bros. Circus program, 1938 (both regular and late season); *Billboard*, March 2, 1959, p. 54, 61.

44. *White Tops*, May-June, 1992, p. 50; July-August 1993, p. 27.

45. *Banner Line*, June 1, 1955, p. 2; *Billboard*, May 28, 1955, p. 63, 80.

46. *Billboard*, May 2, 1959, p. 61, 64.

Additional references can be provided by the author. The E-mail address is draper8@juno.com.



Clarke troupe consisting of twelve persons. The principal acts were ridden by Elizabeth Hannaford and Ernestine and Percy Clarke.

Meanwhile, the Hobson riding act, as well as Juanita's principal riding, was presented on Cole Bros. Circus in 1937 and for part of the 1938 season.

The Cole show opened indoors in 1937 on March 18th at the Hippodrome in New York City. Bessie Hollis, Rose Wallett and Juanita were the lady principal riders. Juanita took her horse Topsy over the flaming hurdles with the greatest of ease. In part of the presentation she did a handstand on the horse's back with her body stretching out in a prone position as the horse and she went over the fire hurdle.

At the July 4th date in Detroit, Linda Jeal came to visit the show. In

Juanita Hobson during the opening stand of Robbins Bros. Circus in 1938.



The Donaldson Litho Company printed this Tom Mix poster of the Hobsons for the 1935 season.

remembering when she herself was the "Queen of the Flaming Zone" more than fifty years earlier, Linda met with Juanita. They must have had much to share. In fact, Homer Hobson, Sr. had gotten the idea for this act from memories of Linda Jeal. However, his sons did not want to try it so Juanita had agreed to perform the fire hurdle.

The three bareback acts on the Cole Bros. Circus in 1937 were the Hobson troupe, the Aurelia (Zoppe) family and the Hollis troupe.⁴²

The Hobson family was on Cole Bros. Circus at the Chicago Stadium date in 1938 where Juanita rode her principal act again opposite Bessie Hollis and Rose Wallet. The bareback riding troupes were the same as in 1937.



The Hobsons then moved to Robbins Bros. Circus. This smaller show, in existence for only this one season, was put on the road by the management of Cole Bros. Circus. Early in the season on Robbins Bros. Juanita rode her principal act along side those of Georgia Sweet and Rose Wallett. In the late season offerings, her partners in the other rings were Ethel "Mickey" Freeman and Rose Wallett. The seven person Hobson family bareback act, excellent entertainment featuring a varied display and Herbert Hobson in spectacular jump-ups, was the sole standing riding act on the show. At the season's end the Hobson riding act retired as did Homer Hobson, then appearing on the Tom Mix Circus. He had completed fifty eight years of circus troupers by 1938.⁴³

In 1939 Herbert Hobson rode a principal act on the Great American Circus. That same year at the New York World's Fair Homer Hobson had livestock in the "Railroads on Parade" exhibit. The director of this activity did not want Juanita to perform in the program because he thought she was of the ingenue type. He wanted all "real" actors from New York. However, none of those persons could drive a team so Juanita ended up driving the six mule hitch in the "going west" scene and riding sidesaddle in the pageant on the five acre stage.⁴⁴

The following year Juanita worked at the Hamid Pier in Atlantic City, troupe. In 1940 and again in 1941 Juanita went back to work in the

The Homer Hobson, Jr. riding act on Robbins Bros. in 1938.

ONLY BIG SHOW COMING THE WORLD'S MOST BRILLIANT CONSTELLATION OF ARENIC STARS

VOL. V, CHAPTER 5, PART ONE
By Orin Copple King

1898

The season of 1898 opened with an announcement in the *New York Clipper*, January 1, of the creation of a new circus in Burlington, Kansas. The entire story is quoted: "NOTES FROM THE S. L. BARRETT & CO'S SHOWS [Not to be confused with the S. H. Barrett Circus.]

"Jumbo" Engle and "Judge" Pennington who have been connected with the Sells Bros.' Shows for several years, will put out a new circus the coming season. They have interested some Kansas capitalists in the enterprise. The show will be known as the S. L. Barrett & Co's Great International Allied Show, in mighty union with Wombwell's English Menagerie and Orisini's Oriental Circus. They will use one advance car and a box brigade and will have about fifteen cars in the show train. The menagerie will consist of fifteen cages of animals, an elephant, etc. They will require over 180 people during the tenting season with the show. The feature of the street parade will be Prof. Newcomb's Cowboy Band of twenty-five musicians mounted on horseback. They have leased the fair grounds at Burlington, Kan., for Winter quarters and are wintering one hundred and twenty five head of fine horses there. Barrett and Eppinger will leave for the East about the first of the year to purchase animals, cars, wagons, canvas and other show property and to contract for the season's printing. The following will be the executive staff of the show: S. L. Barrett, manager; S. T. Engle, assistant manager; L. D. Eppinger, purchasing agent; Wm. Eppinger, secretary; H. Rosenthal, treasurer; and J. F. Pennington, general agent."

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Orin Copple King

A diligent search of the newspapers of Burlington and neighboring towns revealed nothing. There is no mention of the birthing of a new circus which would have been big news in small-town Kansas. Neither is there any report of performances elsewhere. Perhaps the dream remained in the tavern.

* * * *

The *New York Clipper* April 2, 1898, published the following call. "J. M. Barry's Great American Circus, Museum and Menagerie report for rehearsal. Carbondale, Kansas, April 15. Acknowledge call. Lucier Brothers, Denver, write." Like all other shows, the Great American for 1898 would be bigger and better than ever.

Lemen Bros. Circus newspaper ad used in 1898. Pfening Archives.

The *Carbondalian*, January 1, reported that "J. M. Barry proprietor of the Great American Shows arrived here last Monday [December 27], overland, with four cages of wild animals and 33 head of fine horses, that he purchased in Leavenworth. Mr. Barry now has one of the best equipped shows in the west; to put on the road in the spring."

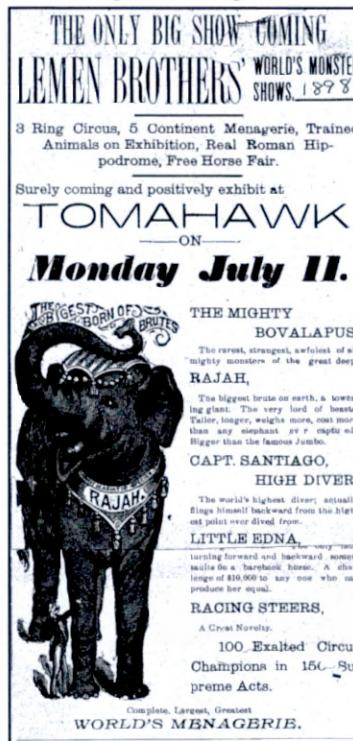
According to the *Carbondalian*, April 9, "Mr. Barry has doubled the size of his Great American Shows by the purchase of almost the complete show of McMahon Bros. Among the purchases are nine trick horses that are known to be among the best in the United States."

Among the stock was a trick donkey which birthed a colt early in February. "The mother is not over 40 inches high, and the colt Mr. Barry says is not bigger than a medium seized dog, yet it is spry and active. He says that he thinks it will be able to follow the show when it starts. It is quite a curiosity."

A large mountain lion was received from Wichita on March 21.

The April 9 *Carbondalian* reported that, "Mr. J. M. Berry (sic) wishes us to state he will open his mammoth (sic) menagerie and circus in this city on April 16th. Mr. Berry has doubled the size of his Great American Shows by the purchase of almost the complete show of MacMahon Bros., during the past winter. Among the purchases are nine trick horses, that are known to be among the best in the United States.

Mr. Berry says that he will put on the road the largest and best wagon show in the United States, and he promises our citizens a great treat.



Mr. B has opened his shows in this city for the past five years and has never failed to please. Let our people turn out, and we guarantee they will not regret the price of admission."

The advance was led by H. P. Kuscher who was on the road a week before the opening, posting bills, but no record of Kansas dates can be found. By May 21 Kuscher was back home in Carbondale with a report that the show was "doing fairly well."

The opening on April 16 was a big success. "Last Saturday was a perfect show day," the *Carbondalian* reported. "The opening of Mr. J. Berry's (sic) big shows was witnessed by crowded tents both night and day. Everybody was well pleased with the performance. The trick horses are simply immense, and they alone are well worth the price of admission. Mr. Berry (sic) has one of the cleanest and best shows that will be seen on the road this season."

"Jesse Crites," according to the *Carbondalian*, "who left here as boss canvasman for the Great American Shows, returned home yesterday [June 24]. He left the show within about 30 miles of the Dakota line. They are doing a fine business."

Despite reports of "fine business" the Great American closed the season in Carbondale on Monday, September 26. The *Carbondalian* stated that, "For the first time the Great American Shows will close the season with the last show at home. The show has had a very successful season, and we know that 'Dad' as he is familiarly known, will give us a show well worth the price of admission."

The final report appeared in the October 1 *Carbondalian*: "The Great American Shows exhibited here last Monday evening to a crowded tent. The show was good and gave general satisfaction. We understand that they will start out again with the shows as soon as the stock rests a little and they can make some needed repairs to the wagons."

The show did not take the road again after the exhibition of September 26.

How Barry got in and out of Kansas without exhibiting along the way remains a mystery.

* * * * *

In the spring of 1898 war with Spain was rapidly approaching. Circus people were just as patriotic as any other American which was proven by the *Topeka State Journal*, April 15, which reported that, "WAR ELEPHANTS. Circus Company Makes a Tender of 25 to the Government.

"Washington, April 15—The department today received word from a circus company that in the event of war 25 elephants would be put at its disposition for active service in Cuba.

"Some of these animals have served in India, and neither the swamps or underbrush in Cuba would interfere with their utility."

There is no indication that the offer was accepted. Acceptance would have changed the entire spectacle of the Charge Up San Juan Hill. It is doubtful that Buffalo Bill, Pawnee Bill and all the other wild west impresarios to come would have found the elephantine extravaganza to be as amusing as this author finds it.

* * * * *

Mankato, Kansas, in 1898 was visited by a circus briefly reported by the *Western Advocate*. The entire mention stated that, "Knowles' circus here last Thursday [April 28] was unfortunate in attendance. They put up a very good performance and are worthy of patronage."

No other reference to the show has been found in the Kansas press.

* * * * *

Lemen Brothers' World's Best Shows spent the winter of 1897-98 improving their quarters in Argentine, Kansas. The March 3 *Argentine Republic* carried the fol-

lowing story: "LEMEN BROS. ARE STILL IN THE RING.

"Last Monday [February 28], a reporter of THE REPUBLIC visited the winter quarters of Lemen Bros.' show and was surprised at the substantial improvements that have been made since they purchased the buildings and grounds. The main building has been covered with a new roof and the entire quarters partitioned off in separate apartments for the various animals and ring horses. The entire building has been supplied with a good system of water works for man and beast, and up to the first of March they have fed 284 tons of hay and it will take 84 tons more to feed the animals till the first of April.

"The elephant quarters where Rajah, the king of beasts, holds his regular matinees, is called the 'bull house' and strangers are welcome to examine his trunk at all hours. Many rare animals have been added to the aggregation this winter and while the reporter was present last Monday another large elephant, a yak, two new ring horses, 22 new sets of harness, two new dens and a new band wagon arrived over the Santa Fe from Chicago. They will start out this spring with 40 cars and 200 head of horses. Frank Fisher, the jolly keeper of old Rajah, is still carrying his arm in a sling from his last bout with the treacherous old monster and said, 'When I get well I propose to get even with him.'

"Major Frank Lemen is one of the

A six horse team pulling a tableau wagon with band on top in an 1898 Lemen Bros. parade. Pfening Archives.





A large three-den cage with a six-horse hitch in an 1898 Lemen parade. Pfening Archives.

hardest working men in the United States and is constantly on the go.

"He is proud of his winter quarters, and as the reporter was about to leave, he remarked: 'We have the best winter quarters in the world and this summer while we are on the road we have contracted for an elephant building of brick and stone, 60 feet square and two stories high that will be an ornament to Argentine."

The main attraction was once again the monster elephant, Rajah, famous for his vile disposition. A reporter for the *Republic*, March 31, found Rajah in winter quarters "weaving back and forth in his stall, straining the links of a half dozen big log chains around his feet and fastened to the floor. Frank Fisher, Rajah's keeper, being out of the building at this time, one of the foremen volunteered to pilot the Man through the caravansary.

"You take Rajah out in the parades?" inquired the Man.

"Nixey; we proposed to take him out in the parade last year in Kansas City, provided the mayor would clear Grand avenue and furnish us six mounted policemen, but his honor refused to take the responsibility as the old sinner was liable to hold up a cable car or tackle a live wire on the electric line. Albert, over there, is the kindest elephant in the world and as full of mischief as a little boy, but he ran away last summer down in Texas."

"What for?"

"Why, during the extreme hot weather in August the sand burned his feet and one day he started pell

mell by himself and never stopped till he had run 95 miles on a bee line across the bad lands with half the cowboys in Texas on his trail, and the farther he went the faster he run till the dust resembled

a dread simoon (sic) or a funnel shaped cloud in the sandy desert."

"Did you keep up with him?"

"Keep up nothing, we lost him during the first half day and sixteen of us were after him and had to track him through the sand. We found him in an old feed barn on the plains, he had torn out one side and went in to cool off. It seemed as if the whole state of Texas was after him and the cowboys demanded \$500 for the right of first discovery."

"Did you have to put up?"

"No, but there came near being grim visaged war. Colonel Frank got out a writ and the sheriff and his deputies and sixteen of the show people armed themselves with Winchesters and agreed to either pay them \$75 or have a second Alamo near the Brazos and after an armed armistice of several hours they agreed to take the \$75. Albert didn't do \$5 damage and it was nothing but a big bluff, but Colonel Frank is a Texan himself and it wouldn't go, so they had to either fish or cut bait and for one weary hour by my old Waterbury there was a beautiful mirage in the desert."

"You got him home safe?"

"Yes, and you can bet he was pleased to get back all right. That elephant knows more than some men. He does all our switching here in the yard, moves the wagons when they get stuck in the mud and chews tobacco."

"What?"

"Look here," he replied, and before the Man could get out of the door, he had poured a handful of smoking tobacco out of a package and Albert swiped it out of his hand as clean as a dog's tongue. The Man was expecting instant death or six month's sick-

ness at least, but Albert deposited the weed somewhere back in his head and came down on it a few times without batting an eye or spitting on the floor.

"That's no lie!"

The advertising car took the road on April 19.

The ad which appeared in the *Republic* on April 21 announcing the opening exhibition on April 30, was the same two-column ad used throughout the season of 1897. Mentioned beneath a cut of Rajah were the Boxing Kangaroo and the only White Sea Lions. Rajah was described as "The Biggest Brute on Earth." He was claimed to be "2 Inches Taller and 3 Thousand Lbs. Heavier Than Jumbo."

Rajah may have exceeded the size of Jumbo, but he lacked the disposition of Jumbo and more importantly the benefit of Barnum's press department.

The ad modestly proclaimed: "\$1,000,000 Invested in this Great Show

"1,000 People, Horses and Animals!

"Transported on Two Trains owned by the Show!

"\$2,500 Daily Expenses!"

The opening of the season was related by the *Republic* on May 5.

"The Lemen Bros.' world's best show gave their initial performances last Saturday night to a large and enthusiastic audience in this city. Among the many new features added to their menagerie this season, is a den of four lions, a den of spotted leopards and two elephants. Rajah, the king of elephants, easily retains his reputation as the biggest elephant in the world and is at all times the center of attraction; and in the circus proper are many new and novel acts that are worthy of mention, but their feature still remains—'Edna, the wonderful'—and this is true to the word, as none other of her sex has ever attempted the daring feat of turning a backward somersault on the bare back of a horse at full speed. She is a revelation in the circus world. The boxing kangaroo does his time better than ever and knocked his trainer out in three rounds which pleased the large audience very much. The hundreds of

gray horses are all in the finest condition and in keeping with the entire show. It would require an entire page of THE REPUBLIC to do simple justice to Lemen Bros.' world's best show. May they live long and prosper! There was only performance on account of the heavy rain, but the audience was well repaid for their discomfort and went home in the rain."

After the opening Lemen Brothers exhibited in Columbia, Missouri, on May 2, followed by additional dates in Missouri, one day at Melvern, Iowa and six days in Nebraska. Deadwood, South Dakota, saw the show on May 16. Moving south the show played two dates in Wyoming and 16 in Colorado before arriving in Garden City, Kansas, for exhibitions on June 11.

Ahead of circus day the Garden City *Sentinel* ran the following handout quoting the Deadwood *Evening Independent* of May 16:

"Lemen Brothers' shows arrived Sunday morning from Chadron and soon began the erection of the city of white tents on the grounds.

"All day Sunday a continuous stream of people looked over their tents, horses, wagons, cages and the big elephant 'Rajah,' and everything looked to be in the best of condition. At 11 o'clock today the grand street parade took place and was witnessed by a vast throng of people who lined the streets and sidewalks. The cages, dens, horses and wardrobes are all in the pink of condition and it was a grand sight to see the golden parade pass over our main streets, and the parade was commented upon as being the best ever seen in our city. The doors of the big show opened at 1 o'clock and then a rush for the menagerie, where rare and curious animals from all parts of the world, took place. The center of attraction was 'Rajah,' the big elephant, and it is a well earned title, for the other elephants look like ponies beside this monster. At 2:15 o'clock the bell rang then the circus proper began. The big military band struck up Sousa's 'Stars and Stripes,' and then a mighty yell from the throats of 7,000 spectators, after the grand march came out. The feature of all features, the sensation of the

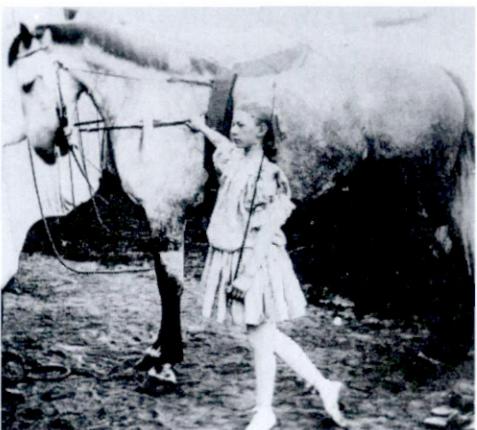
circus world, 'Little Edna,' the only lady somersault rider in the world; the only lady who ever dared attempt to turn a backward somersault on the bare back of her running horse while going at a high rate of speed. The Lemen Brothers offer \$10,000 for her equal and we guess this little wonder is the best of them all. The boxing kangaroo is also very amusing, the aerial acts, the brother acts, the leapers and tumblers are all first-class and the show is all first-class in every particular. Fakirs and gamblers are not allowed around the show."

"Lemen Brothers' Circus showed here last Saturday afternoon and evening [June 11]," according to the Garden City *Sentinel*. "The street parade in the forenoon gave our people an insight into what the show would be and consequently the large tent was filled to its full capacity for the afternoon performance.

"Garden City and Finney county people have seldom had the opportunity of seeing as good a show as Lemen Brothers. The ring performances were exceptionally good, and Little Edna, the celebrated somersault bareback rider was wonderful. The management of the circus offer \$10,000 for her equal in the country, with no takers, and they are safe in keeping the offer open. Rajah, the largest elephant in the world, was one of the chief attractions of the animal tent. He is a monster without doubt.

"This circus, unlike most others, is not followed by a lot of thugs and bums. There was not a single skin game in operation on the grounds and on the whole we can truthfully say it was the most orderly outfit we have had the pleasure of attending for years."

The Dodge City *Democrat* after the exhibitions there on June 13, reported that, "The Lemen Bros. Circus arrived here last Sunday morning and pitched their tents on the Hoover addition on Military Avenue. Monday morning brought in a large crowd from all parts of our county and adjoining towns, till our were crowded with people. The street parade took place promptly at 11 o'clock and was one of the best



Little Edna Maretta, child feature of Lemen Bros. in 1898. Pfening Archives.

that [has] been seen in our city for years.

"Sheriff Bell, Marshal Tate and Mayor Summersby had taken ample precaution to have the citizens well protected from the bums and tramps that usually follow a show of this kind, and the business streets and resident property was patrolled both nights by officers, and the Lemen Bros. and Attorney Forde of the circus did everything to assist the officers in maintaining order. In and about the show grounds. They are gentlemen in every respect and showed by their action that they would not countenance any infraction of the law by any of their employees. It had been reported that the circus had trouble at Lamar, Colorado. But from the actions of the show people here, we are led to believe their statement to be true that it was the tramps and bums who are no part of the show, who committed these depredations and rows at that place. Sheriff Bell notified the show men and hangers on that no gambling or other games would be allowed in and around the show grounds and this was strictly adhered to during the entire time the show was in the city. The performance commenced promptly at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and our people can truthfully say it was one of the best ring performances seen in Dodge City for years. The tumbling and trapeze performance was of the best order and the two large rings were kept going during the two hours in the afternoon. The riding was

some of the best that has been witnessed in our city, especially that of Little Edna who performs the daring act of turning a back somersault on horseback while the horse is going at full speed. The boxing Kangaroo is also another amusing feature of the show. The seats were all crowded long before the performance commenced and every one present expressed themselves well pleased with the performance. The evening entertainment was nearly a repetition of the afternoon performance and was well attended by citizens of Dodge who could not get to the afternoon show, and it was well appreciated by all who attended. The show people used every effort to please the audience and make them comfortable. The menagerie part of the show headed by the big Elephant Rajah and cages of lions and other animals were a great attraction, and the big animal tent was crowded long before the performance commenced. The costumes of the performers were in the best condition and looked pleasing to the eyes of the people."

The June 3, Kinsley *Mercury*, was sprinkled with short paragraphs in the news columns announcing the coming of Lemen Brothers on June 14.

"The wonderful Maretta Family, renowned (sic) aerialists. Will perform here June 14.

"See the open dens of wild animals in the street pageant with Lemen Brothers that will be here June 14.

"The smallest child Equestrienne in the world. Little Edna will perform both afternoon and night with Lemen Brothers on June 14.

"Fighting Tom, the Boxing Kangaroo, will spar four rounds afternoon and night, with Lemen Brothers' big show, here on June 14."

The press department did not neglect the May issue of Kinsley's monthly newspaper, *The Country School*, which listed a few of the coming attractions.

"Lemen Brothers' have a complete Japanese Circus you can see without extra charge. Will be here on June 14.

"The only boxing kangaroo will be here June 14."

The June 17 *Mercury* reported

that, "Lemen Bros., circus has come and gone and the small boy has had a glorious day. The show was of good size for this part of the country and had a fairly good parade, but like all others, the main features advertised were not given. We heard of very little swindling going on, which was due no doubt to the firm stand taken by our city mayor who gave the managers to understand that all gamblers would be rapidly dealt with should they be caught. No show was given in the evening as it started to raining (sic) about six o'clock. The show went from here to Great Bend."

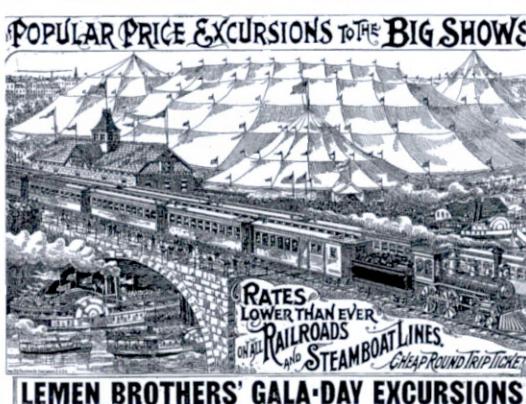
The good report of the *Mercury* was echoed by the *Kinsley Graphic*.

The performances of June 17 at Salina, were briefly described by the *Salina Republican-Journal*. "The circus last evening was witnessed by a fair sized crowd. The hypodrome (sic) part was very good, and Rajah, the big elephant, was admired by every one. Little Edna called forth much applause in her wonderful bare back riding."

The show played Junction City on June 18, and Marysville on June 20, before heading north. Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Canadian provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, followed by Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Utah.

The Wamego, Kansas, *Times*, mentioned that "Lemen Bros.' circus stopped at Wamego, on Tuesday [October 18], en route to winter quarters at Argentine, direct from Ogden, Utah. They took on a lot of feed for horses and animals, including the big

Illustration from a Lemen herald. Circus World Museum collection.



elephant, 'Rajah.'

Home again in Argentine, Rajah celebrated the end of a long tiring season according to the *Republic*, November 17.

"Rajah, the largest elephant in the world broke loose Tuesday morning [November 15] at the winter quarters of Lemen Bros. show in the West End and up to the hour of going to press had not been captured. He has terrorized North Argentine for the past twenty-four hours, smashing box cars in the Santa Fe yard, and drove all the show people from their homes at the witching hour of midnight a 'cutta sark' in 'Tam O'Shanter's' ride.

"Colonel Frank Lemen and Frank Fisher, Rajah's keeper, have had more narrow escapes from death in the past twenty-four hours than the rough riders who escaped while charging up San Juan hill. He also kept the switchmen in the west end of the yard busy hiding out Tuesday night while he tore up several switch stands and smashed a number of box cars. The citizens are becoming excited on the north side and West End and their only hope at the present writing is to keep him in the Santa Fe yard for a couple of hours and jolt him with the California Limited."

The *Republic* on November 17 reported one happy circus story: "Last Monday [November 14] at 2 o'clock p. m., Miss Kittie Rutter, the famous bareback equestrienne, and George Siebert of Lemen Bros' circus, were united in marriage by Justice Trowbridge with Col. Frank Lemen and the Man on the Outside (news reporter) as witnesses. Mr. Siebert is a member of Lemen Bros.' band. The happy couple will please accept the congratulations of the Glorious REPUBLIC."

The only Miss Kittie, equestrienne, advertised by Lemen Brothers was Kittie Krueger. George Siebert was a Topeka circus man.

Not all of the troubles on Lemen Bros. were due to Rajah. On December 8, the *Republic* reported: "Don't Know When He's Got Enough.

"Walter Blanchard, Lemen Bros.' lion tamer who was so horribly

chewed up several months ago by the two big lions at Butte, Montana, arrived in Argentine last Sunday afternoon. It has been nearly three months since he went into the lion's den and his wounds have barely commenced to heal. Dr. Lewis was called in to dress his wounds last Monday, and as soon as he gets able he will visit his mother at Leavenworth. The reporter of THE REPUBLIC was of the opinion that Walter had got an elegant sufficiency of charmed circle, but he is anxious to get well enough to go on the road again in the spring."

Early in December Rajah was again on the loose. The *Republic*, December 8, reported that, "Rajah is back at the old stand a prisoner in chains with 64 bullets in his body, while his companions, Albert and Jennie, are busy masticating wisps of hay and mocking him with sweet liberty. It pays to be good."

The *Republic* gave none of the details of Rajah's revolt, but the entire story appeared in the Narka, Kansas, *News* on January 6, 1899: "A prodigious elephant named Rajah broke loose in Argentine, Kan., the other day and tore the city up for two days. He upset a railroad car and did other violent things. When fired at twenty times he refused to succumb or return. Finally he was captured single-handed by an unarmed man. The people of Argentine watched the performance of Rajah from the roofs of their homes which they considered the most advantageous position. The outbreak of Rajah is attributed to the outbreak of fever in his feet, which makes him intensely irritable. He began by wrecking Lemen Brothers' circus to which he belongs. Three hundred feet of iron switch chain bound his legs. Like Samson, he broke his chains as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth (sic) the fire. First he charged on a smaller elephant named Albert and knocked him down. Then he picked up a cage of monkeys and threw it at the royal Bengal tiger. He smashed the wolves' cage and let loose two of those animals. He broke through the slight wooden partition that enclosed the menagerie and went out to explore. Soon he came to the Santa Fe railroad yards. He attacked a box car with his head and almost butted it



Five box-type cages in the 1898 Lemen parade. Circus World Museum collection.

off the rails but finally allowed it to fall back to its original position.

Then he smashed in the front end of the car. Looking around for something more to break, he saw a switch. Although it was of the strongest iron, he snapped it like a twig. Of course there was plenty of circus men after him. They carried rifles, iron bars, pitchforks and other weapons, and made some plucky efforts to stop him. While Rajah was toying with the switch the men made an attempt to chain his hind legs. He noticed this, and ran north toward the direction of the Santa Fe depot. He saw a man on top of a box car. With his head lowered he charged straight at the end of the car. Instead of upsetting the car he drove his head through the woodwork. The man was thrown down, but while Rajah's head was inside the car he had time to leap up and make his escape. Rajah was surprised for a moment. Then he took his head out put his forefeet on top of the car and looked around.

"The main street of Argentine was near at hand. Rajah dashed in to it. Men ran, women and children shrieked. Soon everybody was indoors and many were down in the cellar. Rajah did not seem blood-thirsty, but he was excessively violent.

"He ambled along the street and tore up a couple of electric light poles. Then he wrenched a hydrant out of the pavement and hurled it through a saloon window. A pleasing array of fresh vegetables caught his fancy for a moment and he stopped and devoured the whole stock. The storekeeper offered no objection.

"At this point a circus man rode past Rajah on a white horse. He was accustomed to follow the horse, and he started in hot pursuit. It was just

what the circus people wanted. They planned to lead him to a field and have him chase the horse or some other round and round until he grew tired.

"Rajah followed the horse until he reached a corn field just outside the city. But he did not chase. He changed his mind and went back to the circus headquarters. The monkeys shrieked with fear, the tigers roared, and the lions lashed their tails as they saw him coming. Rajah threw the monkey house about fifty feet and smashed the glass front of the serpent's cage.

"While the circus people were endeavoring to secure the serpents Rajah proceeded to other business. He broke into the hall where the acrobats practice. One woman happened to be there and watched him with dread from a trapeze up near the roof.

"Rajah tried the trapezes with his trunk and sent them smashing against the roof. Then he put his foot through a big net, and finding himself tangled up he tore it all to pieces.

"Once more he broke out into the open. An old cow gazed at him reproachfully and he charged on her and trampled her to death. Altogether he left the circus three time within a few hours.

"At 6 o'clock when it was dark, he made his way to a small wood near the Argentine elevator. Evidently he wished to find something like his native jungle.

"The keeper on the faithful white horse, then rode forth carrying a lighted lantern. He went within a hundred yards of Rajah and attracted his attention. Men wise in the ways of elephants said that he would follow the lantern for an indefinite time. This turned out to be true.

"Rajah's rage was somewhat abated, but he was in no condition to be handled. All night long he followed the lantern in a leisurely way. Sometimes he stopped, keeping his eye on the lantern, and then moved on again. Thus it was possible to lead him away from the city. In the morning Rajah found himself in another corn field with the tired keeper and the white horse. The other circus men gathered around and used all their cunning. Their

first plan was to build a fire around him in the hope that it would keep him rooted to the spot with fear. They built the fire but it had the reverse effect from that desired. Rajah sniffed at the fire, plunged through it and started on another rampage. By this time the excitement in Argentine was enormously greater than on the previous day. Curiosity overcame fear. Schools were empty and the streets full. City Marshal Lindsborg issued a proclamation warning the people to keep out of the streets while the elephant was at large. They studiously neglected his advice. Rajah ravaged the country around Argentine. He took a light meal of young trees and then amused himself by tearing up a trolley line. At noon he was seen just west of the city chasing four circus men on horseback. The elephant runs with what seems like a gentle trot, but he really makes excellent time. This was evident from the way the men were going. By 2 o'clock in the afternoon the circus men were all nearly dead with fatigue. Several of them had fainted. The situation was very grave. To prevent more damage and perhaps a dreadful tragedy, it was decided to kill Rajah. Frank Fisher and Frank Lemen were appointed executioners. Rajah then stood near the Argentine grain elevator and fears were entertained that he would attempt to pull down this structure, which is the a pride of the city. At a distance of about a 100 feet, and with the protection of heavy earth works Fisher and Lemen poured a steady fire into Rajah from their Winchester rifles. Their aim was to hit him in the soft skin behind the shoulder, but in this they failed. Each fired about twenty bullets. Those which struck Rajah glanced off his skin and buried themselves in other objects. When the firing had gone on for some minutes Rajah ran to the river and took up his position on a sandbank. He trumpeted in an ear and soul piercing manner, a sign that he was intensely angry. Evidently some of the bullets had hurt him. The situation became graver than ever. Rajah was left to shriek for ten minutes with nobody as near as two hundred yards to him. He could have gone wheresoever he

listed. Everybody was in terror of him. But gradually the trumpeting ceased, and the great elephant sank down in to a dejected attitude. Ten or twelve bullets are a heavy dose for an elephant out of training. He was not disabled but sore and tired. Keeper Frank Fisher bravely seized the opportunity. He walked quickly up to Rajah with his ordinary small elephant guard, stuck the hook gently into his trunk and led him away. Rajah went along as quietly as if he had never wandered from his own circus. Soon he was chained up with 200 feet or more of chain. So ended the worst of Rajah's periodical rebellions. They are inevitable in a mature elephant who leads a life of captivity. In a few years Rajah will certainly have to be killed but he may take an ample revenge before then."

* * * *

The season of 1898 for Cullins Brothers New Enormous Shows began with a three-day stand, April 28, 29 and 30 at Concordia, Kansas. The Concordia *Empire*, April 28 carried a brief two-column ad featuring the same cut of trapeze artists used by MacMahon Brothers. The ad failed to "puff" the show with ridiculous claims. The only promise was "a Grand Street Parade Every day. Admission 10 and 20 cents."

The *Empire* reported that, "The billboard across the street announces that Cullins brothers will open the circus season here Thursday, Friday and Saturday of this week."

"Cullins brothers opened the circus

This Cullins Bros. newspaper ad appeared in the Concordia *Empire* on April 28, 1898. Kansas State Historical Society.

CULLINS BROS.' NEW
Enormous : Shows,

CONCORDIA, APRIL 28th, 29th and 30th
Grand Street Parade Every Day.
Admission 10 and 20 Cts.

season here with three excellent performances last week," according to the *Empire*. "All who attended spoke very highly of their show, parts of it being exceptionally fine."

Two handouts appeared in the Norton, Kansas, *Courier* on May 12 touting the exhibition of May 19.

"The city is flooded with circus paper and in the midst of all the excitement don't forget that Cullins Bros. New Enormous shows will exhibit in Norton on May 19th. It is not a show having a large menagerie, roman hippodrome and so on, but a nice, clean moral show given in one ring, where you can see and hear everything that takes place. An amusement enterprise of rare merit, catering to the masses of the people at the low price of 10 and 20 cents. A place where you can spend two and a half hours with pleasure and comfort. Norton May 19th."

And, "Cullins Bros. New Enormous Shows are coming again, and the name and class of their entertainment will be remembered by many that visited the little show last year is quadruple the size of last year and is a credit to the good name the show has made in past seasons. We carry special features for amusement of the little folks and at the same time please the older ones. Don't forget the date, May 19th, afternoon and night."

The *Courier* carried nothing more about the Cullins show, but the Norton *Liberator* on May 22 had praise for the little circus.

"Cullens (sic) Bros. show that visited our city last week was, we think, the best overland show that ever passed this way. It was exceedingly good. They gave a much longer and better show than ever before."

News of small organizations like Cullins Brothers is extremely rare. The last mention of Cullins is an ad in the Cedar Vale *Commercial* on October 7. The same cut of fliers appeared above the following: "More acts, more features, the best performers, bands of music, gaily caparisoned horses, elegantly attired ladies and gentlemen, cages of animals, free street parade at noon, grand free balloon ascension and parachute leap by Prof. Rush, the greatest aeronaut, positively takes

place every day. We give more fun than any show on earth. No fakirs or gamblers. Remember the date, October 10. Come and see the balloon ascension."

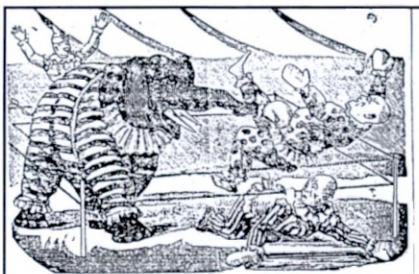
The advertisement was all the recognition Cullins Brothers Enormous Show received from the Cedar Vale *Commercial*.

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Everybody in Narka, Kansas, in 1898 knew the Campbell boys from nearby Fairbury, Nebraska. The Narka *News* on April 28 carried an interview with one of the brothers: "Circus men, like poets 'are born, not made,' said Virge Campbell of Campbell Bros. United Shows, in answer to the question of the writer as to how he came to be in the show business, while we were waiting for a train in Belleville last Saturday.

"There are six of us boys," he went on 'and every one of us from the time we could walk, was intent on becoming a performer. When we lived out on the old farm southeast of Narka, we were always practicing. We never played ball, or marbles, or shinny or any of the games that suits the average youngster. A spring board, a horizontal bar, or some other circus appointment was all we cared for. Our parents endeavored to discourage us and make us good farmers, but when we got to the further end of the corn rows we would immediately begin to practice tumbling, while the weeds kept on growing. Our father seeing at last that we would never be farmers, or good farmers, consented to our following our natural bent.

"We were with others for awhile, but soon became ambitious to possess a circus of our own. We started out with a few tights, a few horses, and an old tent. At our first stand the top of the tent was blown to shreds by a wind storm, and we had to play for some time with only side walls. We kept on, however, treating every one fairly, and giving the best show possible for the money, and though for some years it was terribly hard sledding, we can now truthfully say we have as good a twenty-five cent circus as there is in the United States. We go over nearly the same ground every year and we always have larger crowds than we had before.



**Campbell Bros. Great Show,
Circus, Museum and Double Menagerie.**

**WILL EXHIBIT IN
NARKA MONDAY, MAY 2.**

Two Grand Performances at 2 and 8 o'clock. Doors open one hour earlier. Performing Elephants, Lions, Bears, Ponies, Goats and Dogs.

Free Street Parade At 10 A. M.

The Narka *News* published this Campbell ad on April 29, 1898. Kansas State Historical Society.

"Our menagerie, though not so large as some of the larger shows, has only rare animals. We allow no gamblers to travel with us, and our force at all times endeavor to be gentlemen. This connected with the fact that we treat every one fairly and endeavor to give what we advertise, has been the secret of our success, for we have been successful."

"Just then the train whistled and we parted company, determined to write up the little talk on account of its local interest, the Campbell boys being known to a great many of our readers."

A week after the interview the *News* ran an ad announcing the coming on, May 2 of Campbell Brothers Great Show, Circus, Museum and Double Menagerie. Featured in the advertisement was a cut of a clown elephant in clown wardrobe with a boxing glove at the end of its trunk. One human clown was on the floor and another was flying across the ring propelled by a blow from the elephant's trunk.

Little information appeared in the ad, but it did state:

"Will Exhibit In Narka on May 2.

"Two Grand Performances at 2 and 8 o'clock. Doors open one hour earlier. Performing Elephants, Lions, Bears, Ponies, Goats and Dogs

"Free Street Parade At 10 A. M.

"Children Under 10, 15 cents All Over 10, 25 cents."

"Campbell Bros. Show had two good audiences in Narka Monday

afternoon and evening," according to the *News*, "though it was anything but good show weather. The boys have added a good sized menagerie since last year and have more than doubled the size of their equipment. The performers labored under some difficulties, the ring being rather muddy, but satisfied all who saw them. We cannot speak in detail of the performers but some were the equal of any we have ever seen in their line. There was the satisfaction, also, of seeing all that was to be seen which cannot be said of the three ring aggregations that have generally taken the place of the old fashioned circus. Taken all in all the boys evidently make no vain boast when they say they have the best twenty-five cent show in the United States."

Farther up the same column the *News* commented on boss canvas men. "There are a few things we older boys miss in the circus of the present day. One is the boss canvassman of the olden times. He was generally about six and a half feet tall, with a fist like a prizefighter and a voice like a fog horn. When he spoke the canvassmen had to jump or they might get slugged by a four foot stake. His vocabulary of oaths was large, choice, and was always much affected by the Hard Nut of the town for several weeks after the show had gone. The new fellow is probably an improvement over the old one but he is not half so impressive to the boys."

A handout in the Belleville *Telescope*, April 28, stated that, "Campbell Bros.' Circus will exhibit in Belleville Tuesday, May 3d; admission 15 and 25 cents. This circus started out only three years ago but a very small concern—they had no animals, but their performing was grand. Today they have a fine lot of animals, trained horses, dogs, in fact an average circus, which they have accumulated by honest industry, strict attention to business, and conducting their affairs honorably with the public and with all with whom they had to deal."

A one-column advertisement claimed the "World's Greatest Riders, Clowns and Tumblers." Added to the attractions was a "FREE BALLOON

ASCENSION."

After the show had come and gone, the *Telescope* reported, "The circus Tuesday was not so largely attended as such institutions are in Belleville, the crowd being very slim. The light attendance, however, may be attributed somewhat to the weather, which threatened rain all the forenoon, and in the afternoon it did rain so that few who attended took any comfort or enjoyment out of the performance.

"The Campbell Bros show is some better than last year, but the side show is 'nix gute,'" the Kirwin *Independent* proclaimed following the exhibitions there of Wednesday, May 11. The Campbell brothers "are all gentlemen, allow no skin games and are giving the people a good clean show at a small price."

The *Independent* noted that, "Guy Lindsey is accompanying the Campbell Brothers' circus as a teamster."

Research by Levi Bloyd of Fairbury and Joseph Bradbury, circus historian, resulted in a pamphlet published by the Jefferson County [Nebraska] Historical Society in 1969, entitled *History of the Campbell Brothers Great Consolidated Shows*.

"By 1898," according to the pamphlet, "the wagon show had grown and had 30 wagons and over 100 people and a tent 110 ft. with two 40 ft. poles. This year proved a bad year for the show. Al Campbell was kicked in the face by a zebra, which broke his jaw and one of the trained lions died. The elephant, Venus, had a reputation of being a killer and when she saw her chance she knocked down one of the handlers with her trunk and then crushed the life out of him with her head."

The Lincoln, Kansas, *Republican* had hard words concerning the exhibitions there on May 23. "The show which was here on Monday proved to be a model one so far as the character of the people with it was con-

cerned. No gamblers or fakirs were with it, and at the circus it was announced that a pocketbook had been found which would be returned to the owner if he would call for it."

In another column, "the show was well attended Monday and it was generally regarded as a good thing for the money."

Then the *Republican* asked an interesting question about Campbell Bros.' Great United Shows. "If the show was united what was it before the union took place?"

The Colby *Free Press*, June 9, regarding the exhibitions of June 5, stated that, "The Campbell Bros. circus has come and gone and a very creditable little show it is. The menagerie consisting of about a half dozen caged animals, two camels and two elephants. The circus part was a very pleasant surprise, as it was much better than many thought it would be. The trained horses and trapeze (sic) performance were up to date. They are an exception as a show company in that they do business on a strict business principle and allow no grafting etc. Taking the price into consideration it was a very creditable entertainment."

Virge Campbell, who was handling the advance, told the *Oberlin Eye* that, "The story in the Lincoln and Omaha papers about the vicious (sic) character of Venus, Campbell Bros.' largest elephant, is greatly overdrawn. She did kill one of the showmen at Geneva, Nebraska, this summer, but he had incurred her enmity by prodding her some time previously with a pitchfork, and at the first opportunity she laid him out."

Part of a Campbell Bros. herald. Circus World Museum collection.

Campbell Brothers played Oberlin on August 5. The performances at La Crosse, Kansas on August 13, received a good review from the *Chieftan*: "Campbell Bros. circus, which

exhibited here last Saturday, while making no pretensions to being the whole thing or the 'only aggregation of the kind,' was really a fairly good show, despite the fact that there was not a lady performer in the outfit. The ring performance was excellent, and the work of the acrobats and trapeze performers of a high order. Their animals were well trained and docile, although the proprietors made no attempt to conceal the fact that their big elephant, Venus, killed a man a short time ago at Genoa (sic), Neb. The attendance at the afternoon show was large and the crowd was good natured. Perhaps the fact of the confirmation of the peace news, received that day, had something to do with this. It is likely that at least a thousand dollars, perhaps more, went with them when they left Sunday morning, but no one seemed to regret the expenditure. The show was orderly and brought no gambling devices, pickpockets or, housebreakers with it."

An interesting story about a merry-go-round that played La Crosse for two weeks, ending on circus day, appeared in the *Chieftan* on August 19: "The Merry-go-round people, whose attraction was a winning feature here for two weeks, 'folded their tents like the Arabs and as silently stole away' early Sunday morning. While here they raked in shekels to the amount, it is estimated, of eight or nine hundred dollars. While nothing can be said against this particular form of amusement, yet it seems that the above sum is a good deal of money to be taken out of the town, some of which will doubtless be needed before spring."

Other Kansas towns known to have been played in 1898 were: May 5, Mankato; August 16, Kinsley; May 20, Minneapolis; September 22, Kingman; May 26, Russell; September 26, Sterling; May 28, Ellis; October 28, Hays.

The big news for Campbell Brothers came at the end of the season of 1898 when the Campbells purchased the train of John W. Hummel--nine cars.

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